# FEMINIST LIBERATION THEOLOGY:
# THE DEVELOPMENT OF METHOD IN CONSTRUCTION

A dissertation by

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presented to

The Faculty of the

Graduate Theological Union

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Berkeley, California

April 4, 1980

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## DEDICATION

To my family: Betty, Francis, Joyce, Timothy and Jamie Hunt
With thanks for their care and support from the beginning,
In thanksgiving for love without end.



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## PREFACE

The dead are the only people to have permanent dwellings
We, nomads of revolution
Wander over the desolation of many generations
And are reborn on each other's lips
To ride wild mares over unfathomable canyons
Heralding dawns, dreams and sweet desire.

Rita Mae Brown
"For Those of Us Working
On a New World"

Feminist Liberation theology is a methodology at play when Feminist theologians and Liberation theologians benefit from each others' insights. More fundamentally, this type of theologizing is what people do intuitively when they are faced with questions of ultimate meaning and value. Feminist Liberation theology is not simply an academic exercise. Rather, it is a way to address the universal longing of the human heart for community in God. By naming and describing this process I am in fact calling it into being. Such clarifications are meant to invite others to try a new methodology which I hope will enliven and enrich our corporate lives and work.

Feminist Liberation theology is developing out of my acquaintance with classical theology from both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions as well as from my interaction with feminist theologians and out of a communal effort to grapple with fundamental human issues. It comes from my encounter with Latin American liberation theologians, particularly those who have had an impact on the North American scene through the English translation of their work.

I limit the sources of this project not to provide fuel for



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those who might discredit it, but to underline its fundamental claim, namely, that the development of new ways of doing theology occurs out of the constructive task of synthesizing new experiential and analytic content. An equally important element added to the data of Feminist and Latin American Liberation theologies is the daily effort of the theologian to live faithfully and responsibly as a practitioner in an always challenging world.

This dissertation has been written "on the journey." I have penned it on the road, on buses, trains and planes during the last few years of study and travel with several long stays in a library carrel for the historical and synthetic work. It has been shaped by studies at the Graduate Theological Union and the University of California, Berkeley. Of equal significance has been my participation in Seminary Quarter at Grailville (1975), Theology in the Americas in Detroit (1975), Clinical Pastoral Education at the California Institution for Women (1978) and the Maryknoll Mission Institute (1980). These were all occasions for the same kind of theologizing which I am attempting to describe in this project. These specific programs, as well as teaching, lecturing and strategizing with friends and colleagues have shaped my theology in ways still too deep for me to name.

Theology of this sort, and I will claim theology of any sort, is second level reflection on <u>praxis</u>. My own <u>praxis</u> has included the usual work of the academe. It has been characterized by efforts in the Women's Movement particularly as it affects the Church. I have been concerned with greater inclusion of women and minorities in the life of the Christian community. I see this dissertation as a <u>praxis</u> of sorts, as a reflected upon effort to aid large-scale social change.

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The power of ideas is limitless and not to be underestimated at a time when more than ever feeding the hungry and clothing the naked remain our primary work.

My task as theologian is threefold. First, it is to facilitate the questions of ultimate meaning and value which arise in a faith community. I offer Feminist Liberation theology as a resource, as a tool, as a framework for doing that. Second, my task is to chronicle the various answers that members of a community, indeed whole communities, come up with for the questions they confront. I have pulled together some of the answers that Feminist and Latin American Liberation theologians have arrived upon in the last decade. Finally, my task is to integrate theological insights into the larger spectrum of intellectual/analytic life of a culture. I invite readers to join me in this aspect of the task as we offer theological reflection from a Feminist Liberation theology perspective to other theologians, to our colleagues in other disciplines, and to all of our companions on the journey.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am a woman committed to
a politics
of transliteration, the methodology

of a mind
stunned at the suddenly
possible shifts of meaning- for which
like amnesiacs

in a ward on fire, we must
find words
or burn.

Olga Broumas
"Artemis"

Collective scholarship, long a feminist ideal, ends when the first word is typed. However, the process of developing Feminist Liberation theology has been a communal one, and for that I am profoundly grateful. It could not have been otherwise. However, responsibility for every word is, in the final analysis, my own.

The support and challenge of colleagues made this project not only possible but enjoyable. I am indebted to my doctoral committee at the Graduate Theological Union: Anita Caspary, Thomas Schubeck, Rosemary Radford Ruether (of Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary) and especially Joseph M. Powers, my faithful advisor, for their challenge and encouragement.

I appreciate the gracious support and assistance of the GTU staff throughout my doctoral work. I thank the GTU Library staff for their cheerful competence during my stack-stalking research. I am thankful for the scrutiny and stimulation of my colloquium colleagues, especially for Clare Fischer's example and friendship. Carol Adams'



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careful reading and sisterly suggestions have been invaluable.

The sustenance and love of friends have made me realize that Feminist Liberation theology belongs in community. I give thanks to Dorothy M. Maione who started me in this process more than a decade ago and who continues to challenge me. I thank Robert G. Canavello whose involvement attests to the fact that Feminist Liberation theology is not for women only. Gratitude in abundance goes to Janet Garrow, Elaine Huber, Ann Cathrine Jarl, Mimi Marchev, Jody Parsons, Loey Powell and Mary Catherine Rabbitt whose sisterly encouragement touches me deeply. The support of Irene Moriarty, Diane Miller and Michael Durall made this project possible; for their support and for their friendship I am grateful. Elise Krabbe's careful typing is an important part of the project.

Thanks without need of words flow to Diann Neu whose love and levity made final copy a reality and life in the process a joy. Finally, with many people left unmentioned but appreciated, I thank my family, to whom this dissertation is dedicated, for their generosity and understanding.

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# INTRODUCTION

To move among the tender with an open hand,
And to stay sensitive up to the end
Pay with some toughness for a gentle world.

May Sarton
"An Observation"

Developments in theological method arise from the changing perception of the theologians' task, as well as from the changing composition of those who are engaged in the theological venture. In the past fifteen years, 1965-1980, the task of theology has shifted gradually from exploring the implications of the death of God in the late '60's, to attempting to speak meaningfully of God again in the early '70's, to discerning who is talking about God in the late '70's. The question in the '80's, it seems to me, is what method or methods are adequate for sparking and illuminating the challenge of God in the world? The purpose of this dissertation is to provide an answer to this question, and by so doing to invite other answers as well.

This new question of theological method has arisen as a result of the recent phenomenon in theology of taking seriously the perceptions of women, Blacks and Third World persons for the 'doing' of theology. The notion of 'doing theology' or 'theologizing' reflects the kind of integrated acting/reflecting that such persons bring to the discipline. Formerly it was assumed that theologically trained persons in Western Christian circles, who were predominantly white males from middle class backgrounds, could speak universally, that is, make theological claims for all persons. The methodology for such pronouncements was clearly described.



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As we are coming to understand that various perspectives affect not only the articulation of but the experiencing of that which is deepest in human experience we are becoming clear on the fact that no one perspective can authentically ground a universal claim. Likewise, it has become clear that we cannot simply invite competing claims to join the process without regard for their differences. Rather, we must develop ways to evaluate and choose among competing claims and thereby illuminate the God-human-world relationship which is characteristic of theology.

New understandings of the God-human-world relationship surface when previously silenced voices join the theological chorus. This relationship, which I take to be the crux of theology, is brought into focus for each of us by the experiences we have, the culture in which we live, the mystery of God active in our midst and the tradition from which we come. The old method of moving from preconceived categories (whether Aristotelian or Kantian) to new content is inadequate to handle our many experiences, cultures, etc. No longer do we begin with creation, redemption, etc. and move to new myths about each. Rather, we begin with ourselves, our situations, our visions, our needs for change, and ask how we can make sense of these. The categories will follow.

We ask about communities of faith and action in which the conversation about ultimate meaning and value emerges. We look around to see who is involved in the conversation and we begin to share ideas. The resulting theology will be from the fruit of many sets of experience, culture, mystery and tradition. Then and only then can the many strands of religious search be pulled together into one people.

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I propose to develop a method adequate for theological reflection of this sort in the '80's. To do so I will follow a six step process which coincides with the chapters of this dissertation. I will explore the theological tradition out of which such a method arises and sketch its religion-cultural dimensions (chapter 1). Next, I will examine Feminist and Liberation theologies (chapters 2 and 3 respectively) with attention to their developments, content and methodologies. I will look at various theological methods (chapter 4) and assess their key points which will be used in the construction of a new method. I will proceed to a comparison of Feminist and Liberation methodologies (chapter 5). Finally, I will propose an alternative method which I call Feminist Liberation theology, a method of dialectical conversion (chapter 6), which has both academic and pastoral applications (chapter 7).

A look at the theological tradition and presuppositions out of which such a methodology is emerging will help us to see that it is consistent with previous models. Changes in methodology take place like paradigm shifts. When the occasion for retooling arises there always seems to be an alternative to replace the old style.[1] In the case of Feminist Liberation theology we will look first at the background in light of its many indications of the methodological shift I am proposing. We will see that Feminist Liberation theology is an adequate answer to the changing paradigm in theology.

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## CHAPTER 1

## THE THEO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND FOR FEMINIST AND LIBERATION THEOLOGIES

> Theology might not provide answers you like to accept, but it can force questions you ought to be aware of.
>
> James M. Gustafson

The theological tradition in which new data can be incorporated at every turn has its modern roots in the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, though its ancient roots can be traced to Plato. Schleiermacher's aim was to develop and articulate a hermeneutic adequate to the entire scope of knowledge, not simply applicable to the narrowly defined task of textual or situational interpretation. He stated the objective succinctly:

> Hermeneutics deals only with the art of understanding, not with the presentation of what has been understood. The presentation of what has been understood could only be one part of the art of speaking and writing, and that part could be done only by relying upon general principles.[2]

It is "the art of understanding" with which method is concerned. It is the way in which we make snese of and synthesize the 'stuff' of our lives.

For Schleiermacher understanding is always a dialogical relationship between speaker and hearer. Understanding is the union of subject and object. His so-called psychological approach to hermeneutics is a unique way of understanding understanding (after the fashion of Lonergan) as "a basically referential operation."[3] Understanding comes about when we compare things in the world with other things in the world. We



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understand something new "by comparing it to something we already know."[4] While there is nothing new under the sun, there is a very distinct way of moving from the unknown to the known. There is a method which is expansive and inclusive of new data. We have common agreement about certain things in the world, agreement which is arrived at by consensus of experience and used as a starting point for evaluating new material.

This process of understanding according to the Schleiermachian insight involves what later became known as a "hermeneutical circle." This process of interpretation is a method by which "a whole defines the individual part and the parts together form the circle."[5] Many theologians since Schleiermacher have relied on such a model though the process is known by various names. The term is usually traced to Bultmann. It is currently used by Liberation theologian Juan Luis Segundo with a more general meaning than Bultmann intended.

There is a logical difficulty with such a circular process. This leads some theologians, myself included, to focus on the dialectical nature of understanding. But in any case, the question of one's starting point needs to be addressed, as we will see in the various methods to be considered.

There is general agreement that

> A certain pre-understanding of the subject is necessary or no communication will happen, yet that understanding must be altered in the act of understanding.[7]

That is what I refer to as the spiral of presuppositions which form a starting point which is at the same time fixed and flexible. Schleiermacher posited an "intuition" or "feeling of absolute dependence," a faith stance. Kierkegaard called his a "leap of faith." Both functioned in the same way, namely to ground the seeming circularity in a trans-

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cendent dimension of reality. I offer presuppositions which come from my faith stance. But these presuppositions are not meant to limit the method to those who share them.

For purposes of this study I wish to follow in this tradition by grounding my model in faith presuppositions which will form an inner spiral of analysis for my method. The presuppositions are always in tension with the elements of the method, Experience, Culture, Mystery and Tradition which I will spell out later. Faith always has content. In my case the content can be expressed into the following four elements:

1. forgiveness is possible
2. hope is warranted
3. courage to act justly is expected
4. starting point is with the struggling poor.

These will be spelled out in more detail later but for now it is important to know that they are operative throughout the study.

As in the case of any faith presuppositions, the content of these comes from my experience. In particular, it comes from my experience as a Western, female, middle class, white Christian. But of greater significance is the fact that such content is both continuously accepted throughout the spiral and constantly in process of redefinition and rearticulation. These presuppositions arise from a Christian background but their position in tension with the method means that the Christian aspect is subject to critique.

What remains constant is the fact of my being informed by faith presuppositions, which in the Thomistic framework we call "the habit of thinking" that there is something transcendent which grounds the whole enterprise. What changes throughout can be described as the

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product of the interaction between the presuppositions and experience. Just as experience is shaped by the presuppositions, so too are the presuppositions in constant process of being redefined on the basis of the experience.

This frank exposition of and reflection on presuppositions is not meant to limit the applicability of what is developed in this dissertation. Particularly it is not meant to limit the conclusions to a Christian audience and certainly not to an audience which agrees with the presuppositions. Rather, it is meant to clarify from the outset the function of any hermeneutical circle, and to illumine the ground of the methodology I am proposing. Failure to address this forthrightly from the beginning would place the writer in danger of operating out of a logical fallacy at best, or in danger of operating with a missing link at worst.

The attractiveness of this hermeneutical approach lies in both its comprehensiveness and its collaborative possibilities. It provides a way to experience experience (after the fashion of Lonergan), that is, a way to encompass the data which gives meaning to human experience on both macro and micro levels. The structural/cultural analysis is subject to the same scrutiny as that of the personal/relationship analysis. No elements are considered untouchable or sacrosanct. Even the sometimes sensitive, always delicate faith parameters are subject to a dubito which in the long run, I will argue, serves to strengthen them.

Another positive aspect of this approach is that it produces sufficiently tentative results so that one can encompass conflicting views without necessarily agreeing with them. One can see, for

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example, how shared presuppositions in dialogue with different experiences will produce a different perspective on questions of ultimate meaning and value. This allows collaborative efforts which would not be possible in a more rigid approach. Similarly, the approach is sufficiently elastic to allow constructive work with the imagination as well as with the data of experience. This means that both human intentional activity and the active though often elusive presence of God in the world can be taken with equal seriousness.

Finally, this approach takes advantage of the fact that all humans have their experiences to offer to the theological enterprise. Hence, the collaborative possibilities are limitless. Our look at Feminist and Liberation models demonstrates this.

There are many ways to express the insight of Schleiermacher. Mary Daly offers an updated version when she states that the aim of feminist theory is "to understand holistically--that is, using mind/imagination/emotions--the significance of the facts..."[8] Daly captures from a feminist perspective what Juan Luis Segundo articulates from a liberationist perspective. This insight is that the hermeneutical circle approach which includes experience, ideological suspicion, a new experience of theological reality, theological suspicion of traditional hermeneutics and eventually a new reality, is the most adequate way to handle the myriad of data which make up contemporary theology.[9]

While Daly and Segundo make convincing cases, I contend that neither alone is sufficient to handle the complex theological reality we face. This will be clear in chapter 5 when Feminist and Liberation methods are compared. But both perspectives are examples of approaches which are multi-faceted and easily applicable, after the fashion of

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Bultmann, to more than simply an exegetical or theological problem.

An adequate theology for the '80's will be capable of interdisciplinary application. The framework I am constructing is one which can be applied in a variety of academic and pastoral situations. But in and of itself such a framework provides no guarantee that particular political or theological problems can be solved, nor that complex ethical issues can be simplified into solutions. More modestly, but perhaps of greater consequence, the only guarantee is that the questions of ultimate meaning and value can be given a genuinely communal hearing. A broadly based constituency can evaluate for itself how the experiential, cultural, mysterious and traditional elements of their lives hold together and form every expanding horizons of possibility.

Such a methodology arises out of a theological background in which such concerns are central. As noted above, the trend toward methodological precision of this sort can be traced to Schleiermacher. But a sketch of the recent theological background, as drawn from the Protestant side by Langdon Gilkey in Naming the Whirlwind and from the Catholic side by T.M. Schoof in A Survey of Catholic Theology 1800-1970, hints at why such methodological concerns have arisen once again in quite a different situation.[10]

Gilkey describes the major facets of Protestantism from the 19th century through the mid '60's, namely, Liberalism, Neoorthodoxy and Radical Theology as main categories. Liberalism, according to Gilkey is,

> the deliberate attempt of religious thinkers, who accepted the results of modern physical science and modern historical study, to make their faith intelligible to the increasingly secular mind of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[11]

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Albrecht Ritschl and Auguste Sabatier number among the leading figures.[12] Liberalism contributed at least four elements which ground our current Christian self-understanding. First, the development of the physical sciences presented a challenge to theologians who were forced to understand Christianity in terms of symbols rather than as a set of divinely given truths. The introduction of the social sciences in current theological work represents a further refinement of this insight. Second, the acceptance of historical relativity gave theologians a way to see Christian statements in their contexts. It became clear that all theological affirmations are rooted in a particular time and place. As Bernard Lonergan is reputed to have quipped: "Concepts have dates." The contemporary analogue is our developing understanding of personal relativity, the extent to which particular viewpoints are conditioned by the experiences of the speakers.

A third contribution of Liberalism to the theological scene is an understanding of Christian life as focused on human community. This stood in sharp contrast to the previously widely held notion that Christian life found its meaning primarily in transcendent, other worldliness. For the first time in the modern period Christians were directed to securing justice and freedom here and now as a reflection of the future. The contemporary development of this concept can be seen in the Liberation theology emphasis on changing unjust social structures. This is sometimes criticized as a tendency to shy away from the eschatological aspects of Christianity, but is defended as an integrated eschatology.

Finally, Liberalism left Christianity with the possibility of a variety of ways of looking at truth in both historical and eschatological

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terms. This was seen especially in the dialogue with other world religions and in the conversations with people holding conflicting views within the faith tradition. It left Christians with a clear sense of responsibility to love the neighbor regardless of disagreements. The contemporary analogue to this element is the inclusion of those who have no faith tradition in all conversations about ultimate meaning and value.[13]

While these four points may seem obvious to contemporary Christians it is important to locate their origin in Liberalism for two reasons. First, it is useful to stress that these are very recent teachings in Christianity. This fact may help us to contain the impatience which arises when theological change gets bogged down in the slow process of consciousness raising and ecclesiastical politics. Second, it is important to stress that the relative newness of these concepts means that Liberal theologians were countering so-called unalterable truths which had reigned since the Reformation. The qualitative change in consciousness which Liberalism represented has been pushed quite far as evidenced by the contemporary parallels noted above.

The most important manifestation of Liberal theology for purposes of this study is the Social Gospel Movement. This significance of this movement lies in its acceptance of the notion of communal accountability or social sin in light of the four elements of Liberalism. This is a concept which is used to break down the privatism of contemporary theology. It is a major tenet of both Feminist and Liberation theologies.

Walter Rauschenbusch, the major writer in the Social Gospel Movement, developed the concept of social sin in his book A Theology for the Social Gospel.[14] He stated that:

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> A theology for the social gospel would have to say that original sin is partly social. It runs down the generations not only by biological propagation but also by social assimilation.[15]

Reinhold Niebuhr rejected Rauschenbusch's work, tagging it "sentimentality."[16] While Rauschenbusch may have erred by de-emphasizing the concrete social/structural conditions which make community impossible, he succeeded in pointing out the extent to which Christianity is at its core a social/communal teaching. His emphasis on the fact that Christianity finds its fullest expression in the midst of suffering and healing communities has never been fully integrated into the life of the Church.

Liberal theology fell from fashion because of changing understandings of the concept of development. Curiously, this is another central tenet in Feminist and Liberation theologies. The adherents of Liberal theology labored under the delusion that development meant progress. This is an ideological notion which disenfranchised people understand and unmask for the fallacy that it is. Langdon Gilkey summarizes it as follows:

> The two world wars, the breakup not only of traditional but even of democratic and liberal European society, the eruption of massive evil in Nazism, the potentiality of the future domination of the world's life by a totalitarian culture, even by the threat of our nation--all of these have made the doctrine of the perfectability of man (sic) and of society incredible notions to most twentieth century minds.[17]

The response to this misguided optimism about the human spirit was Neoorthodoxy. Many of the so-called giants of 20th century Protestant theology number among the Neoorthodox scholars. Among them are Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Gustav Aulen and Anders Nygren.[18] In a seemingly

Pavlovian reaction to Liberalism, Neoorthodoxy developed as a theology "which deliberately eschewed secular wisdom and sought to be Biblical and orthodox in the twentieth-century world."[19] Neoorthodox scholars took a rather dim view of contemporary wisdom. They sought a return to traditional sources with only the slightest suggestion that contemporary social scientific tools could be useful for discussing how God is present in the world.

Nuances among Neoorthodox thinkers vary widely so the dangers of lumping all such thinkers into any categories seem obvious. But Langdon Gilkey isolated six points which set parameters around the group at least for purposes of identification. I will suggest that some seeds of contemporary method seem inherent in them. Gilkey's points follow:

1. God is necessary for humans to exist and to exist as humans.
2. The world is the realm of sin; secularity signals a separation of humans from God.
3. Humans are dependent on revelation, including both Hebrew history and the story of Jesus, for truth and grace.
4. Faith is the only base for theology. Social scientific and historical studies are decidely secondary to Christian teachings.
5. Faith is taken seriously as a presupposition. Theology admits as evidence the mysterious, the illusory, the divine which cannot be verified outside of a faith context.
6. Faith is a precondition for action. It is the precondition for the formulation of an ethic adequate for contemporary life. Word and sacrament precede action or work.[20]

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The first three of these tenets of Neoorthodoxy contain the three elements of any theology, namely, God, the world and humanity. In these clear statements of the nature of God, the world and humanity we can see the extent to which Neoorthodox scholars left aside Liberal understandings. They did so with a realization that the elements must be addressed from contradictory positions. They then dealt with the faith dimension in the latter three points, constructing and defending their hermeneutical circle. Faith is presupposed and preeminent.

Note that in this study I will follow this pattern by acknowledging the three traditional elements of theology and spelling out my faith presuppositions. I will claim that this is what Feminist and Liberation theologians have done as well. However, the content and next steps differ significantly. The lack of data from the social sciences and the failure to move beyond traditional sources spelled the demise of Neoorthodoxy and constitute important elements of contemporary theologies.

Neoorthodoxy, like Liberalism, fell at its own hand. It presented an important corrective to Liberalism by re-emphasizing the Bible and revelation. But it erred on the side of hubris in its collective attempt to know everything about divine reality. Paradoxically it left little room for the Spirit which, according to traditional Christian teachings, guarantees that growth will take place in the human community.

The result of Neoorthodox scholars' efforts was a kind of other-worldly Christianity. It was characterized by an elite whose theological prowess conferred theological power on the basis of inside information, and a mass which seemed doomed to failure because of

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ignorance. It was virtually a neo-Gnostic approach which Gilkey described this way:

> Neoorthodox theology presupposed a stark and real separation between the Church and the world, between belief and unbelief, between the Word of God and the secular.[21]

This radical dichotomy proved inadequate to sustain belief, and even less useful for compelling action. In short, Neoorthodoxy proved to be too limited in its sources and too dogmatic in its claims to encompass the increasingly complex questions which arose in the twentieth century.

The theological impact of the work of Darwin, Freud and Nietzsche challenged the basis of Neoorthodoxy and had a great impact on theological thinkers. Freud's profound questions on the nature of religion and religious need, and his analysis of psychological dependence challenged the Neoorthodox doctrine that God is at the root of the human potential to be human.[22] Darwin's evolutionary theory raised serious questions for theologians who based their anthropology on biblical materials.[23] Creation stories could never be understood literally again. This at a time when modern tools of biblical criticism were coming into vogue left Neoorthodoxy looking quite inadequate. Similarly, Nietzsche's work provided a philosophical grounding for serious questioning about Christianity. These questions could not be answered apart from the possibility that God was no longer acting in the world, a possibility that Neoorthodoxy had great difficulty addressing.

For all of its shortcomings, shades of Neoorthodoxy can be found in both Feminist and Liberation theologies. In the broadest sense

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Neoorthodoxy reinforced the validity, even the necessity of faith as a self-critical factor for assessing needs and compelling action. This foundation in faith continues to be a cornerstone in contemporary theology. In the narrowest sense, Neoorthodoxy underscored the claim that God, or some equivalent linguistic expression for transcendent reality, is crucial to the full flowering of human possibility. Both Feminist and Liberation theologies rely heavily on the concept of God, albeit a quite different one than Neoorthodoxy proposed, for the explication of their programs. In all we can conclude that the emphases of Neoorthodoxy have carried through to the present day but with content which reaches far beyond its original scope.

In much the same action/reaction fashion that Neoorthodoxy followed Liberalism, Radical Theology of the Death of God Movement followed Neoorthodoxy in the '60's. For many mainline church folks the movement was simply a product of media attention which had little to do with their lives. But even today the lingering effect of asking the hard questions about deity after the Holocaust and in light of the qualitative changes wrought by technology are felt in mainline denominations. Gabriel Vahanian wrote of the absence of God.[25] Paul van Buren lamented the death of the word 'God'.[26] Thomas Altizer grappled with the death of Christendom as we know it.[27]

Throughout the movement there was a curious, almost nostalgic, adherence to the person of Jesus. While he was for some stripped of his divinity and for others regarded as merely an avatar among other avatars, the movements remained basically Christian. Hence Richard Rubenstein (perhaps more properly placed with Jewish Holocaust theologians, but influential in these circles nonetheless) named the most

profound challenge. He questioned belief in God after the slaughter of six million Jews, an atrocity beyond comprehension.[28] How could any God, much less the Judeo-Christian God of history, have willed or even permitted the Holocaust? This challenge at the level of faith succeeded in pushing Christianity into a profound identity crisis similar to the one which we will see is occasioned by the feminist questions about the inherently patriarchal nature of Christianity.

The Death of God movement succeeded in at least two lasting ways. First, it brought religion back into vogue after a decade or more of postwar malaise. It helped people on the streets and people in the pews to begin talking together as if God were an operative concept in their lives. Admittedly some of the discussion was in fact quite negative or anti-religious. But some of it had a lighthearted ring to it as people began to reexamine their faith lives in a technological society.[29]

Second, the Death of God movement reminded us that religion has an important place in the collective unconscious, that it has a symbolic value far beyond its theological content. This paved the way for what Robert Bellah popularized as "civil religion" and opened the door for "political theology."[30] Ironically, the Death of God was followed by the resurrection of religious images and symbols in the secular order. All of this served to reinforce the idea that Christianity belongs in the marketplace, an idea that both Feminist and Liberation theologies take as axiomatic.

The radical or secular theologians took seriously the fact that theological reflection cannot take place in a vacuum. It must be tested in the world where the Word of God takes root. In the late

'60's when an unpopular war was waged and an ecological crisis of great proportions was close at hand the absence of God made logical if not emotional sense. It at least provided a context for challenging the prevailing institutions, especially the mainline churches. At most it provided the ferment out of which questions like whose God is it, what kind of God is adequate to our needs, and how do we resurrect God on the side of the needy. All of these were questions which Feminist and Liberation theologies later addressed.

On the Catholic front the situation was no less varied over an equivalent timespan, despite the aura of ecclesiastical control. T.M. Schoof's A Survey of Catholic Theology 1800-1970 complements Gilkey's Protestant perspective.[31] Schoof's treatment of the period is more historical and less analytical than Gilkey's, but it gives a flavor for the changes that Roman Catholicism underwent albeit from a European perspective.

Following Vatican I Scholasticism's days were numbered. The rational base for faith which was the Enlightenment's legacy was widely challenged. John Henry Newman succeeded in describing "the various factors which play a part in the historical development of the Church's consciousness of faith," a process which paralleled his own development.[32] The institutional Church was coming into the modern world slowly, and not without internal struggle.

Modernism was in the air. Well documented papal tirades followed in its wake, leaving behind theological confusion. The papal pronouncements belabored the obvious in many instances, confirming the fact that the so-called Modernists were really just post-Scholastic in their thinking, and influenced by the historical, philosophical and

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religious ferment of their day. Even this insight, that theology should be in dialogue with the cultural/temporal context in which it arises, was qualitatively new in Catholic thought which had previously been rooted in absolutes.

The result of these discussions was Neo-Thomism, the single most important trend in twentieth century Catholicism. Neo-Thomism is based on the claim that "Faith is at the same time both a human reality and a reality which is sustained by God's grace."[33] This seems obvious enough to the contemporary reader, but the realization that it was only in the 20th century that Roman Catholic theology was infused with this idea makes it easier to understand how slowly change takes place. The human/God relationship, often referred to as a horizontal relationship (as opposed to a vertical $\frac{\text{God}}{\text{human}}$ relationship which characterized earlier thinking) opened the way for questions of religious experience and faith, religious experience and empirical knowledge, and theology and history to be discussed. All of these form the backdrop of Catholic contributions to Feminist and Liberation theologies.

Neo-Thomism, or transcendental Thomism as it is often called, is best represented by the work of Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, Eduard Schillebeeckx and Piet Schoonenberg.[34] These are the writers who have set the theological tone of the century and it is out of or over against their thought that Feminist and Liberation theologies have come. The strides they have taken in articulating new understandings of the God-human-world relationship have paved the way for new theological forms. Although I understand the theological task to be ecumenical at base, I find that current Roman Catholic theology is fertile ground

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for locating and expanding Christian self-understanding.

Vatican II provided Catholicism with a reference point such that pre- and post-Vatican II theologies are markedly different. Vatican II combined the charism of Pope John XXIII with a church ripe for change, and was the product of ecclesiastical/political workings which bordered on intrigue. But the result of Vatican II was a set of documents which opened up liturgical and lifestyle options as never before. Vatican II widened intellectual parameters beyond that which most thought possible. For example, on biblical scholarship the mandate to study scripture was before the Church at large, not simply before theologians.[35] The challenge to explore other world religions was offered in a similar way.[36] These and numerous other academic openings signalled official sanction for already extant scholarship.

Pope John XXIII in his opening speech to the Council set what for some was a remarkable tone:

> ...the Christian, Catholic and apostolic spirit of the whole world expects a step toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which however, should be studied and expounded through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter which must be taken into greater consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.[37]

The Pope opened up Catholic doctrine for the first time to the scrutiny of the modern world.

The Council offered two major innovations which serve as underlying factors for the development of Feminist and Liberation theologies.

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First, it offered the newly ecumenical approach to Scripture, taking account of modern tools of biblical criticism. For the first time the sacrosanct nature of Scripture, and I would argue for some parts of Tradition, were exposed to the light of day in the academe. Old ways of interpreting texts and previous reliance on unexegeted verses would no longer be tolerated. This meant that conceptual changes were inevitable.

Second, Vatican II brought changes on the pastoral level. Previously unchallenged issues were called into question (e.g. worship with Protestants, use of the vernacular in liturgy, etc.) leading to the conclusion that human experience as translated into church policy is contextual. It is dependent upon history and situation. This, like the new light on Scripture presented Catholics and those who took Catholic theology as the bellweather for Christian thought in general with a qualitative leap in theological self-understanding.

Although these two features of post-Vatican II Catholic theology have not yet filtered through the entire hierarchical maze which characterizes the magisterium, the foundation was laid for both Feminist and Liberation theologies. There remained a deep respect for the "deposit of faith" but there arose a demand for a new hermeneutic which would allow scholars to interpret Scripture with the aid of modern thought.[38]

Vatican II provided a clear mandate for renewal of pastoral action which was soon actualized by Latin American bishops.[39] It was a watershed for theological workers who "were able to set to work again afterwards with renewed energy and greater freedom."[40] It opened up for Catholics not only whole new areas of previously unasked questions

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but it invited, some would say demanded, whole new ways of asking questions. It allowed much greater (though not yet enough) participation of lay theologians and of nonprofessionals in the field. This paved the way for developments in systematic and foundational theology of which Feminist and Liberation theologies are only two expressions. In sum, Vatican II brought fresh air to a Church which had become theologically stagnant.

From this account of Protestant and Catholic theological development from the 19th century to the mid 1960's we can see that the two followed quite separate paths. But since that time the major theological movements have been ecumenical. This is not to say that dogmatic differences have disappeared, nor that difficult questions like intercommunion have been settled. Nor is it to underestimate the extent to which the divergent histories shape our approaches to issues. But it is to say that there is a shift when the two major theological expressions of the most recent period, Political theology and Process thought, are without strict denominational delineations.

Political theology in Europe and Process thought in the United States have had, and continue to have substantial impacts on the doing of theology. Although they are important for their content, their uniqueness lies in their function as indicators that an ecumenical theology might be emerging. Political theology was the European parallel to the Death of God movement in the United States insofar as it raised new questions about deity in culturally turbulent times. Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Latin American Liberation theologian whose work was rooted in Political theology, pointed out that Political theology was an attempt at fundamental theology. But he indicated that it was

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not a new constructive theology. Rather, it was an effort to highlight the political dimensions of all theological reflection.[41] As such we might consider it more of a method specific than a content specific theology.

Main exponents of Political theology include Ernst Bloch, Dorothee Soelle, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Johannes Metz.[42] They were intent upon incorporating the Enlightenment insight that "the political order is an order of freedom."[43] Hence it is in the political (read: socio-cultural) order that the needs of persons in groups are expressed and met. However, proponents of what is called "new political theology" resist the temptation to absolutize or propagandize on the basis of their own sectarian leanings.

A corollary to Political theology, and an expression which paralleled its growth both in Europe and the United States was the Theology of Hope. Written by political theologians such as Moltmann, it refined both the meaning of political and the concept of eschatology.[44] In this latter dimension which Liberation theologians later took up we find a key to Christian self-understanding and hints at strategies for change. Moltmann's concept of eschatology, which forms the backdrop for both Feminist and Liberation understandings, is that of hope in this world as the locus of future promise. Moltmann phrases it this way:

> The world is not yet finished, but it is understood as engaged in history. It is therefore the world of possibilities, the world in which we can serve the future, promised truth and righteousness and peace.[45]

This eschatological position is based on the notion that the crucified Christ gives meaning to hope, better, that history and eschatology, the cross and the resurrection form one unified promise located in the world.

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Dorothee Soelle foreshadowed Feminist and Liberation theologies by stating that 'political theology' is a redundant term. Political theology, she argued, must be understood "not as a mere component but as the essential formulation of the theological problem of our time."[46] Theology takes place and finds meaning in the world. All theology is political whether its exponents realize it or not.

Theology, according to Soelle, is to be organized around a hermeneutical principle which calls for "authentic life for all humans."[47] Any theological efforts which do not have this as their guiding force, are, according to Soelle, inadequate to express the presence of God in the world. Feminist and Liberation theologians, if not directly influenced by Soelle's work, have come to the same conclusion by indirect influence.

The second major theological thread which has emerged from the ecumenical efforts of the last fifteen years is Process thought. This work is based on the philosophical system of Alfred North Whitehead.[48] It consists of a dynamic metaphysics and an open-ended view of God, the world and humanity. The major North American figures, John Cobb, Charles Hartshorne and Daniel Day Williams share a philosophical foundation which is in keeping with post-Einsteinian scientific claims.[49] Their discussion of actual entities, occasions of experience, concrescence and the like allows theological categories to be fluid, to move with the every changing experiences which ground faith.

Among the many contributions of Process thought to the contemporary methodologies is its evaluative categories. Traditional metaphysical foundations of theology, whether Aristotelian or Kantian,

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rely on truth and internal logic for evaluating positions. But with the onset of a process perspective the categories shift to adequacy and meaningfulness. No longer do we ask if something is 'true'. Rather, we ask if it is adequate to express the depth and breadth of experience. No longer do we say only that a position is logically inconsistent or that it does not follow the linear path from one point to the next. Rather, or in addition, we ask if it is meaningful, if it relates to other positions in a way that provides mutual illumination. These features have prompted some Feminist theologians (though fewer Liberation theologians) to look to Process thought as an aid to approaching some of the problematic aspects of Christianity.[49]

Political theology and Process thought are the last two theological expressions before the so-called theologies of particularity, strategic, indigenous or liberation theologies. I will detail the distinctions between and among these later. But let the theological background be rounded out by the mention of some of them. Black and Native American theologies have been formulated primarily in the United States.[50] Asian and African theologies express the efforts of persons on those continents to move beyond the European spawned models to indigenous work.[51] Other groups have contributed to what is known in an umbrella way as liberation theology. But I have chosen to focus on two such expressions, namely Feminist and Latin American Liberation theologies to illustrate how from these points of view method in theology is changed.

The umbrella term is 'liberation theology' but both Feminist and Liberation (as I will call Latin American theology) theologies are particular and strategic theologies. They are particular because

they arise from the unique set of experiences of a group of people in struggle. They are strategic because they are aimed at alleviating oppression. They are indigenous because they arise from the set of circumstances which is proper only to a limited setting, and because they are geared to the needs of the people there. The remarks which I will offer on method pertaining to these two could, it seems to be, be applied to other such liberation theologies. But that work remains to be done. Nonetheless, the impact of all of these theological expressions is sufficient to raise serious challenges to the discipline.

John Cobb has summed up the impact of these theologies:

> ...blacks and women and Latin Americans have, throughout the decade, been demanding that theology be so formulated as to call for and advance human liberation.[52]

He goes on to say that "insofar as they are seaprated from the technical, historical and methodological questions dealt with by the 'establishment,' these theologies suffer incompleteness."[53] It strikes me that it is equally true to say that 'establishment' theology is incomplete without these various expressions. Just as I have taken pains to show how they fit into and take wisdom from the traditional theological strands and categories, I hope the 'establishment' will look carefully at these expressions. Hence, I offer Feminist and Liberation theologies, and eventually my own synthesis, Feminist Liberation theology, as the elements necessary for a complete, though always tentative theology for the '80's.

Before moving on to the Feminist and Liberation theology chapters it is useful to note a few religio-cultural elements which affect theology in the '80's. Broad statements in this regard serve

only to set the tone. But they are useful insofar as they are taken as indicators of the current scene.

The general political tone is conservative, with a renaissance of American nationalism over against developing countries, and an increasingly unstable financial picture which keeps folks scrambling to stay afloat. Response to earlier American intrusion into Third World countries, by both those countries and by other major powers, has raised the threat of the draft. Nuclear weapons abound, with few grassroots calls for disarmament listened to much less heeded.

Popular religiosity, in the face of these trends, is moving away from the mainline denominations and toward such groups as Campus Crusade, evangelical revival and gospel churches. The electronic church is gaining followers, indicating that some feel that religion can be packaged in a technological society.

Increasing class polarizations are noticeable as unemployment and periodic lay-offs bring the macro economic difficulties home. Capitalism has built-in safeguards against equality. Subtle forms of degradation plague women and Blacks as affirmative action and civil rights find their way into vocabularies but not into procedures manuals. For example, harassment against women on the job and the Bakke decision give away the fact that little has been done to change structures of consciousness which result in oppression. Third World persons are perceived as a threat to already shakey jobs. Lesbians and gay men are attacked for offering a challenge to the prevailing anthropology. Many of these forms of oppression are baptized by the Christian churches. Few are actively opposed. It is from this cultural mix that Feminist and Latin American Liberation theologies emerge.

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The Christian Churches (and the various strands of Judaism, though I am confining myself to Christian sources in this discussion) are experiencing a significant challenge from the New Religious Movements. They seem to have grown up for a variety of disparate reasons, but converge as an alternative to mainline faiths in which many of their new members grew up.[54] Thousands of people are expressing a renewed interest in spirituality by joining such groups as the Unification Church, the Divine Light Mission, Transcendental Meditation, Subud, etc.[55]

An adequate discussion of their impact on mainline churches is beyond the scope of this project. But two major issues deserve mention. First, the New Religious Movements are growing, indicating on the one hand a disenchantment with traditional religions and on the other hand a growing interest in spirituality in general and the need for community in particular. Second, the New Religious Movements for the most part are not having a structural impact either on the mainline churches or on socio-cultural structures of society. For both of these reasons I conclude that the New Religious Movements are, for purposes of Christian theology, instructive for what they tell us about peoples' spiritual and communal needs. But they are not likely to constitute a substitute for mainline churches. Neither Feminist nor Liberation theology seems to be influenced greatly by any of the New Religious Movements though elements of the feminist community are sometimes placed in the New Religious Movements category.[56] Nonetheless both Feminist and Liberation theologies exist in a religious milieu which has been affected in a significant way by these groups.

In light of this theological and cultural background and in

the midst of unprecedented evangelical fervor and burgeoning spiritual groups the task facing Christian theologians is to formulate parameters within which authentic development can take place. It will be development that is active, not reactive, offensive not defensive. It will be constructive theology based on new sets of experiences but attentive to traditional canons of belief.

I offer the following parameters as a starting point for evaluating new theological forms. It is with these elements as criteria that I selected Feminist and Liberation theologies as the basis of my look at theological method. But it will become clear in chapter 5 that neither of these alone is adequate to process the questions of ultimate meaning and value which I expect will arise in the nuclear dominated future.

It seems to me that an adequate theology for the '80's must be grounded in the following five aspects. First, it must be pluralistic. Already the theological scene is too varied for it to be otherwise without a complete power play which would obliterate all but the most conventional forms. It will draw insights from traditional sources as well as rely on advances made in both the physical and social sciences for an inclusive approach to human problems. The traditional sources include Scripture, Tradition and Church History, while the social sciences would include economics, political science, sociology and psychology. Built-in will be the notion that every particular expression of theology is de facto in dialogue with every other expression because the complexity of God is too vast for it to be otherwise.

Second, an adequate theology must, it seems to me, be ecumenical.

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The Protestant and Catholic strands of the Christian tradition have, except for fine points of doctrine, collapsed into a single thread which is in dialogue with other major world religions, especially Judaism, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. This conversation must become an on-going part of Christian self-understanding. Similarly, the dialogue with those who profess no religious faith, as well as with those who profess antipathy toward religion will enrich the theology of the '80's. Already the Marxist-Christian dialogue has raised challenges to our ways of interpreting Scripture and our approach to the impact of religion on the social sphere (cf. chapter 3 on Liberation theology). These challenges will be an integral part of the emerging theologies.

Third, an adequate theology for the '80's will be, as all Christian theology has been, eschatological. This element has two poles, this-worldly and other-worldly. But what I take as its primary meaning is the extent to which elements in the physical world as we know it form the preconditions for the possibility of the reign of God. Concretely, the eschaton or the so-called kingdom, is not entirely other-worldly. By the same token it is not salvation accomplished simply by righting unjust social structures. In Christian theology for the '80's some middle ground must be struck, a way in which the transcendent reality of God which transforms the human reality of finitude and death is reflected in the social structures. This theology has a transcendent reference point as well as a mandate to be relevant to the contemporary order.

Fourth, an adequate theology for the '80's must, it seems to me, be rigorously historical. For Christians, the historicity of Jesus has a normative function. The experience of his death and resurrection

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which animated the early Christians continues to be communicated. We have not only that experience but the collective experiences of generations of Christians, as well as the collective interaction of Christianity with other religious and cultural influences. Any theological expression which does not take seriously this historical dimension will truncate its own possibilities for illuminating the faith.

Fifth and finally, an adequate theology for the next decade will be pastoral. Whether the term is praxis-based or applied, the emerging theologies are located in the nexus between life crisis and celebration which I call the pastoral realm. It is here that people make sense of their faith. It is here that they use faith as the backdrop for action. Hence only a theology which has as its raison d'être an active witness to love and do justice will be sufficiently focused to be useful. Otherwise theology runs the risk of being empty words, or misplaced emphases with little if any relation to the lives of persons from whose faith it is supposed to have sprung, or for whom it is intended to be meaningful.

The five qualities, pluralistic, ecumenical, eschatological, historical and pastoral form the beginnings of criteria for constructing theology which is methodologically adequate. Both Feminist and Liberation theologies measure up to these criteria, something I will detail in their respective chapters. But a synthesis of the two will, it seems to me, measure up with even greater promise.

Given an historical sketch, a brief look at the contemporary order and an outline of the qualities necessary for theological construction, we can see that our task is to devise a way to handle new

data as it comes in and to synthesize it into a usable theology. This demands a method so that it will not result in a collage of experiences which cannot be evaluated and critiqued. Uncovering, perhaps creating, a method which is pluralistic, ecumenical, eschatological, historical and pastoral is difficult. It means choosing the constructive works (in this case Feminist and Liberation theologies) which most closely approximate these criteria and then reflecting on their methods with an eye toward extracting their highlights and adding other materials if needed.

I have chosen Feminist and Liberation theologies for reasons which will be obvious in their respective chapters. But in so doing I must acknowledge their limitations. At the same time I have relied on theological data from other traditions, namely, the work of Bernard J. Lonergan in transcendental Thomism and Gordon Kaufman in liberal Protestant thought. They help to answer two important questions. First, how do we develop a method which will help us to sort out but include the relevant factors for theological analysis? And second, how much weight do we give to the various factors we choose for such a method?

Such metamethodological questions demand at least a working definition of method itself. Lonergan is useful. He writes that all knowledge is a function of experiencing, understanding, judging and acting in a knowing subject.[57] With this starting point, method is "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results."[58]

We can see method at play throughout the history of theology. But categories became reified such that what was intended to be only normative because for many prescriptive. We know now with more

sophistication how the very categories themselves shape our thinking such that it is impossible to yield "progressive results" without a greater openness than most theology has had to new categories as well as to new content in old categories.

Lonergan goes on to say that "To put method in theology is to conceive theology as a set of related and recurrent operations advancing towards an ideal goal."[59] This "ideal goal" is, it seems to me, twofold: praise and worship of that which created all that is, and development of human relationships which mirror the reverence we have for the Creator. Method then is called upon to be a framework for "collaborative creativity."[60] It is that which guarantees, insofar as anything can, that theology will remain faithful to its purpose.

An opposite approach to method is one proposed by Hans Gadamer who advocates letting the matters at hand direct the process.[61] Gadamer's dialectical model in which the new data shapes the subject by changing her/his whole way of being in the world is analogous to the consciousness-raising or conscientization process by which new experiences call established categories into question. Just as in Lonergan where the starting point is the human subject acting on a pure desire to know, so too in Gadamer's seeming anti-method the questioner becomes so much a part of the process that she/he becomes a part of the questions themselves. This is helpful as a corollary to Lonergan's method especially for handling the "nonquestions" which. "nonbeings" or the marginalized raise for theology.[62]

Gordon D. Kaufman offers another perspective on method which will be explored further but which deserves mention because it will figure prominently in the new formulation. He writes that "theology

is human work" which involves understanding symbols and their functions.[63] Theology criticizes the limits of all symbols and reinterprets them as content changes. It reconstructs symbols when they are inadequate to carry their own weight. Hence, for Kaufman, the method by which this understanding, critiquing and reconstructing takes place is central to the question of how theology changes.

I will point out what I consider to be methodological shortcomings in both Lonergan and Kaufman (in addition to methodological reflections on Bernard Meland and David Tracy though these will be less detailed). Their weaknesses notwithstanding, both focus not simply on renewed content which can shift with the theological wind, but new methods, the very vehicles by which all change takes place.

Mary Daly and Juan Luis Segundo, feminist and liberation theologians respectively who have focused their attention on method, raise fundamental questions about the way in which the discipline has been shaped.[64] Only new methods, they argue, will rescue theology from obsolescence.

Daly critiques the entire discipline as an exercise in "Methodolatry."[65] She claims that the "false gods" of method have meant that "the choice of a problem is determined by method, instead of method being determined by the problem."[66] The "tyranny" of method hinders progress in the form of new questions and results from the "nondata" of "nonquestions" by "nonbeings" being ignored.[67] Daly draws parallels between the static nature of theological method and the static nature of social and political structures which are infused with the same modus operandi. Whether theologians are conscious of it or not, their complicity in the stagnation of the culture is rooted

in their attachment to methodolatry, according to Daly. Her conclusion is that only in Feminist philosophy, and particularly in Feminist meta-ethics, can this problem be remedied.[68]

Juan Luis Segundo, a Latin American Jesuit, has perceived the importance of method but has opted for a revisionist but no less radical approach. Rather than simply inserting new data into an inadequate methodology (as other strategic and indigenous theologians have done) he has attempted the "liberation of theology" from its static ways. He suggests replacing preconceived categories and unexamined presuppositions (which he claims can result only in ideology) with a hermeneutic circle. The circle consists of four moments: a) experience of reality which leads to ideological suspicion, b) application of ideological suspicion to an ideological superstructure, c) new ways of experiencing theology which lead to suspicion about the prevailing interpretation of Scripture and Tradition, and d) the emergence of a new hermeneutic for interpretation. The new hermeneutic in turn gives rise to a new experience of reality which leads to more ideological suspicion and the process begins again.[69] Unlike Daly who seems to point to the possibility of a pure strain, Segundo assumes that ideology is everywhere present and simply corrects for it in his method.

Daly and Segundo suffer shortcomings which I will allude to in chapter 5. However, both are illustrative cases of how change in content pales before change in method. In theology, at least in recent years, the most profound changes in content have come about when theologians began to think wholistically, taking into account the experience of those whose voices have not been heard. But only substantive change in the way theology is done, that is, in method, will guard

against repeating the same exclusionary tactics against other groups, including those whose voices have been predominant. Only changes in method will propel theology into the '80's with a message worth repeating.

The task of contemporary theology, indeed the purpose of this dissertation, is to begin with the theological tradition and develop a methodology which walks the thin line between preconceived categories on the one hand, and chaotic input from all sides, on the other. It must be a method sufficiently dynamic to handle contemporary cultural analysis and the diversity of experiences yet sufficiently stable to maintain the spirit of the tradition and the priority of mystery.

Three examples of church people struggling to articulate their theology point out the urgency of this need. The National Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order formulated guidelines for "responsible ecumenical debate" on abortion and homosexuality "in the hope that Christian unity may grow and be maintained."[70] One can almost hear the commissioners' confusion and anguish as they hammered out point after point, and this was only the guidelines for debate! It seems that they could have proceeded to the issues directly, in Segundo's words they could have "been liberative" rather than "talking about liberation," if they had had a theo-ethical method with which to work.[71]

Similarly, James D. Whitehead and associates at the University of Notre Dame would have had an easier time, and I suggest, would have produced a more usable document on "Method in Ministry" if theologians had provided them with a framework.[72] Their efforts, while laudable as a first step, show a clear lack of theological grounding. Hence the method for ministry is useful as far as it goes, but cannot be expected

to cover the depth of the field without a theological root from which to grow.

The Theology in the Americas group has attempted to articulate a liberation theology adequate to the needs of North American Christians. Special interest groups emerged from the Detroit meeting in 1976. Feminists, Blacks, Hispanics, etc. have been meeting by themselves to discern pieces of the theology.[73] But synthesis seems to have organizers baffled. I submit this is because there are no commonly agreed upon parameters of what constitutes theology. In short, there is no method by which to unify all of these disparate groups.

I have stated already that theology emerges out of concrete (pastoral) situations and that theological reflection is useful only when it is reapplied to concrete situations. But this too is a circular approach. Just as in hermeneutics a certain preunderstanding is taken for granted, so too in theology method is a presupposition because content by itself does not provide an entree into the discipline. Rather, content and a radical openness to an increasingly varied body of content is called for. Even this must be refined. It is out of the refinement that method emerges. Method is the process whereby we both expand and limit the content which makes up a discipline. This central theme will be taken up in chapter 6 after we have looked at and compared Feminist and Liberation theologies and proposed a new method.

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## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION and CHAPTER 1

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[2]Friedrich Schleiermacher, Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscript, edited by Heinz Kimmerle, translated by James Duke and Jack Forstman, (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), par. 1 of Ms. 3.

[3]Richard Palmer, Hermeneutics (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 87.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Rudolf Bultmann, Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. II (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohrn, 1952). Cf. mention of Bultmann in Juan Luis Segundo, Liberation of Theology (Maryknoll, New York: Orbin Books, 1976), chapter 1, especially pp. 8-9.

[7]Palmer, Hermeneutics, p. 25.

[8]Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), pp. 150-151.

[9]Segundo, Liberation of Theology, pp. 7-38.

[10]Langdon Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969). T.M. Schoof, A Survey of Catholic Theology 1800-1970 (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Newman Press, 1970).

[11]Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind, p. 74.

[12]Albrecht Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation (New York: Scribners, 1900). Auguste Sabatier, Outlines of a Religion Based in Psychology and History (New York: J. Pott and Co., 1902).

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[14]Walter Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel (New York: Macmillan Co., 1918) and Christianizing the Social Order (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

[15]Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, p. 61.

[16]Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 189-190.



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[17]Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind, p. 80.

[18]Among the major writers among Neoorthodox theologians are the following: Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936-1977); Heinrich Emil Brunner, Dogmatics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950-62); Gustav Aulen, Christus Victor (New York and Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1931); Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros (New York: Macmillan Co., 1937-39).

[19]Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind, p. 82.

[20]Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind, pp. 85-89.

[21]Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind, p. 102.

[22]Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion (London: H. Liveright and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1928); Moses and Monotheism (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1939).

[23]Charles Darwin, The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1896).

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[26]Paul M. van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

[27]Thomas J.J. Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

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[29]Anthony Towne's Excerpts from the Diary of the Late God (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) is one of the most illuminating and amusing books of this period.

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[31]T.M. Schoof, A Survey of Catholic Theology 1800-1970 (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Newman Press, 1970).

[32]Schoof, Survey, p. 171.

[33]Schoof, Survey, p. 189.

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[34]Among the works of the major authors in this period are: Bernard Lonergan, Insight (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957) and Verbum (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967); Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961- ); Eduard Schillebeeckx, Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963).

[35]Dei Verbum (The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, promulgated Nov. 18, 1965) Documents of Vatican II, edited by Austin P. Flannery, op, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1975), especially pars. 21-26, pp. 750-765.

[36]Nostra Aetate (Declaration on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions) Documents, pp. 738-749.

[37]Opening speech of Pope John XXIII to the Council, October 11, 1962. Cf. The Documents of Vatican II, edited by Walter M. Abbott, sj, (New York: The America Press, 1966), p. 715.

[38]The need for this kind of hermeneutic was hinted at in Divino Afflante Spiritu (Pius XII, September 30, 1943). Cf. Acta apostolicae sedis (Citta del Vaticano: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanus) Vol. 35, pp. 297 ff.

[39]CELAM I and II--meetings of the Latin American bishops. eg. The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin American in the Light of the Council (Bogata: General Secretariat of CELAM, 1970-73).

[40]Schoof, Survey, p. 258.

[41]Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), chapter 11.

[42]Ernst Bloch, Atheism in Christianity (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972); Jürgen Moltmann, Religion, Revolution and the Future (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969); Wolfhart Pannenberg, Revelation as History (New York: Macmillan, 1968); Johannes Metz, Theology of the World (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969); Dorothee Soelle, Political Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974).

[43]Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 221.

[44]Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope (London: SCM Press, 1967).

[45]Ibid., p. 338.

[46]Dorothee Soelle, Political Theology, p. 60.

[47]Ibid., p. 60.

[48]Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933); Process and Reality (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929).

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[49]Cf. the efforts of feminists and process thinkers as expressed in "Conference on Feminism and Process Thought" edited by Sheila Davaney (Claremont, Ca.: Center for Process Studies, 1978). Cf. also John B. Cobb, Jr. "A Critical View of Inherited Theology," The Christian Century, Vol. XCVII, No. 6, Feb. 20, 1980.

[50]The following are representative of Black theology: James Cone, Black Theology and Black Power (New York: Seabury Press, 1961); A Black Theology of Liberation (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); God of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1975). J. Deotis Roberts, Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971); A Black Political Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974). Major Jones, Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971); Christian Ethics for Black Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974).

Native American theology is beginning to develop. The work of Vine Deloria (God is Red (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1973)) is typical.

[51]Among the many examples of indigenous theology are the following: Kosuke Koyama, Waterbuffalo Theology (London: SCM Press, 1974); Choan-Seng Song, Third-Eye Theology (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1979); Kafi Appiah-Kub and Sergio Torres, editors, African Theology en Route (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1975); Sebastian Kappen, Jesus and Freedom (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977); Roy Sano, The Theology of Asian Americans and Pacific Peoples: A Reader (Berkeley: Pacific School of Religion, 1976); African and Asian Contributions to Contemporary Theology: A Report of a Conference (Bossey, Switzerland: The Ecumenical Institute, 1976).

[52]John Cobb, "A Critical View of Inherited Theology," p. 195.

[53]Ibid., p. 195.

[54]Cf. The New Religious Consciousness, edited by Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

[55]Jacob Needleman, The New Religions (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970); Jacob Needleman and George Baker, Understanding the New Religions (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978).

[56]Cf. Emily Culpepper, "The Spiritual Movement of Radical Feminism," in Understanding the New Religions, Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978).

[57]Bernard J. Lonergan, Insight (London: Longmans, 1957).

[58]Bernard J. Lonergan, Method in Theology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 5.

[59]Ibid., p. 125.

[60]Ibid., p. XI.

[61]Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

[62]Mary Daly develops this theme in Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), especially pp. 26-28. She presupposes it and builds on it in Gyn/Ecology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

[63]Gordon D. Kaufman, An Essay in Theological Method (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, 1975), p. XI.

[64]Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). Juan Luis Segundo, Liberation of Theology (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976).

[65]Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father, p. 11.

[66]Ibid., p. 11.

[67]Ibid, p. 11.

[68]Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

[69]Juan Luis Segundo, Liberation of Theology, p. 9.

[70]"A Call to Responsible Ecumenical Debate on Abortion and Homosexuality," National Council of Churches, Commission on Faith and Order, January 1979.

[71]Juan Luis Segundo, Liberation of Theology, p. 9.

[72]James D. Whitehead, "Method in Ministry: A Tri-Polar Model of Theological Reflection," University of Notre Dame, Fall 1978, unpublished paper.

[73]Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, editors, Theology in the Americas (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976).

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## CHAPTER 2

## FEMINIST THEOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed
I have cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,
with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.

Adrienne Rich
"The Dream of a Common Language"

Advances in theological method take place when new content is brought to bear from new experiences. In the last fifteen years the entrance of women into the mainstream of theology has raised fundamental questions about the nature of theology and the way in which it is carried out. As John Cobb noted:

> No one in seminary education can have been unaffected in the '70's by the surge of women into ministry and by the theological issues that women are raising.[1]

These questions have been answered in two ways. On the one hand women have made significant contributions to the traditional fields of study, having mastered the disciplines and having been accepted, to a limited degree, into the ranks. On the other hand, women have begun to put critical skills to work in order to articulate how our previously untapped experience, when fed into the theological mix, causes new content and new method to emerge. It is this second way of answering fundamental questions with which I am concerned. This is the essence of Feminist theology.

I have chosen to focus on Feminist theology as one of the two

methods which are currently having a significant impact on theology for a number of reasons. Feminist theology is the specialty area within which I do my own work, although my concerns are in no way narrowly confined to the so-called 'women's issues.' Rather, the awareness of the historical and contemporary oppression of women provides me with the self-understanding that Lonergan and others consider to be crucial for theological reflection. My experience as a woman is not isolated. It is my way into the complex interstructuring of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism and imperialism which result in systemic oppression.

Feminist theology, it seems to me, poses a fundamental challenge to Western Christianity, namely that all theology heretofore has been formulated on the basis of male experience. As such, Feminist theology raises a challenge at the level of faith--is the tradition inherently patriarchal, and if so must women and men who are conscious of this limitation move beyond it? I choose Feminist theology as an area of investigation because it contains within it the possibility of correcting the male bias and the beginnings of an inclusive effort to celebrate the salvific presence of God in our midst.

Let me begin with an important clarification of terms. By 'feminist' I mean not simply the liberation of women from sexism, whether linguistic, conceptual or physical, though all of this is important. Nor do I mean simply the end of discrimination, the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and the eradication of gender role stereotypes, though all of these are necessary. Above all I do not mean a turning of the tables so that women can glean reparations by treating men in the same way that we have been treated for millenia. This is not 'feminist' in the sense I mean. What I intend by the word

'feminist' is an insight into the historical and contemporary oppression of women which informs all efforts toward equality and inclusion.

This insight has two major implications which, it seems to me, are far more inportant than correcting past inequalities although this is the beginning of the challenge. The first implication is the extent to which the oppression of women brings to consciousness the devastating effects of irrational discrimination on the human psyche. This helps us to focus on the individual, particular woman whose potential is unrealized because structures of consciousness prevail against her. We can abstract from this experience to other forms of oppression, for example, against the physically handicapped or against those whose first language is not the one which prevails in a culture. We begin to understand how structures have an effect on the individual.

The second implication is the extent to which the oppression of women mirrors for us the interstructured network of oppression mentioned above, including racism, classism, heterosexism, imperialism, etc. This helps us to see how women are the oppressed of the oppressed (e.g. Black women) and how men too experience oppression (e.g. Third World and/or gay men). From this implication of feminism we can see the importance of avoiding self-righteous claims through privatized analysis, a trap which has caught some white middle class women. We see too the need to deepen our understanding of the complexity of evil. Because of this acknowledgement of interstructuring we can see that feminist theory is aimed at cosmic evil as it is experienced by individuals through oppressive structures. This alone makes it proper material for theological reflection, and results in a new phrasing of the question of theodicy.

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With this clarification in mind I will move on to look at Feminist theology as it has developed in the United States.[2] Because Feminist theology arises out of concrete situations, the transfer value of particular content from the United States to other countries is limited. However, the insight that arises from Feminist theology, namely, that every theological statement is partial, limited and contextual, can be, indeed must be transferred. In this sense, Feminist theology has the potential to transform the discipline since it acknowledges that the personal and structural aspects of experience are transformative (as we will see in chapter 3, Liberation theology makes the same claims about the communal and structural aspects).

I will outline the major content issues which have arisen before dealing with what I understand to be the method of Feminist theology. I will use the same plan in chapter 3 for Liberation theology and then compare them in terms of their content and methods in chapter 5, using the synthesis as a basis for a new method. Throughout the work my underlying concern is with providing a method capable of grounding and stimulating the work of love and justice in the '80's. The adequacy of any method will be tested by how closely it approximates that work.

Feminist theology is an organic and communal process of sharing insights, stories and reflections on questions of ultimate meaning and value. It is based on an awareness of the historical and contemporary oppression of women. It is at once an analysis of a concrete situation of oppression and a strategy for overcoming oppression so that the preconditions for the possibility of the reign of God (what in traditional terms is referred to as 'the kingdom') may be actualized.

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Feminist theologizing (the process of moving toward answers rather than theology, the set of answers) always includes an analysis of class and race, of national origin and sexual preference, of religious background and age, etc. It aims at being as precise as possible about the many aspects which ground a person's starting point so as to be able to discern the similarities of life experience which flow from differences. The primary emphasis on women's experience is an effort, as Mary Daly noted, to "find in our authentic likeness to each other the opportunity to exhibit and develop genuine differences."[3]

The history of Feminist theology reveals much of why it has placed its priority on inclusivity. Feminist theology traces its roots to The Woman's Bible. Historian Carol Adams points out that this traditional starting point for Feminist theology does not tell the whole story. While it is true that The Woman's Bible is the first self-consciously theological effort, it is more properly understood as a "culmination of agitation and concern in the nineteenth century."[4] Adams suggests, and I agree, that an earlier tracing is to the work of Matilda Joslyn Gage. Gage's Woman, Church and State contains treatments of celibacy, canon law, witchcraft, polygamy, etc. from a woman's point of view.[5] Gage's inscription is sufficient to earn her a place in the history of Feminist theology:

> Dedicated to all Christian women and men, of whatever creed or name who, bound by Church or State, have not dared to think for themselves.

She went on to say that it was

> Addressed to all Persons, who, breaking away from custom and the usage of ages, dare seek Truth for the sake of Truth. To all such it will be welcome; to all others, aggressive and educational.[6]

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Perhaps the same can be said for much of contemporary Feminist theology.

The Woman's Bible was an effort led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her Revising Committee to lift up verses in the Bible which refer to women directly and reinterpret them in light of a new self-understanding.[7] This was a scholarly accomplishment in light of the absence of modern tools of biblical criticism. But the spirit of Stanton and colleagues was more than equal to the task:

> Others say it is not politic to rouse religious opposition. This much-lauded policy is but another word for cowardice. How can woman's position be changed from that of a subordinate to an equal, without the broadest possible discussion of all the questions involved in her present degradation?[8]

Their method was simple. They each had two copies of the Bible. One they kept intact. The other they cut up so that they had each of the passages which mentioned women on separate sheets and could exegete these passages according to their developing hermeneutics. They tried to correct the former interpretations which had provided fuel for negative and/or stereotypic views of women.

The results created great controversy. This was anticipated by some of the theologically trained women who refused to sign their names lest their scholarly reputations be tainted. Stanton and friends were encouraged by the larger cultural efforts to win the vote for women, to change property and civil procedures, and to include women in a more equitable way in the job market and educational world. They played a major role in these efforts, thus setting a precedent from the beginning for feminist scholarship to be rooted in praxis. Unfortunately the well documented decline of the North American Women's MOvement had its parallel in the theological realm. The Woman's Bible

all but disappeared. Nonetheless, these women made important strides in founding Feminist theology.

By the turn of the century changes began to take place. Ordination of women was permitted in some denominations and women were accepted into some theological schools. Nonordained ministry flourished as women took over tasks of visiting and religious education. Throughout the period from 1900 to 1965 some women like Georgia Harkness, for example, wrote, lectured and taught.[9] However, their focus was rarely on women's issues. They pursued the classical theological issues and rarely raised the issue of their own place in theological life.

Roman Catholic women religious developed structured alternatives to patriarchal culture. Despite their clearly subordinate relationship to a male-dominated structure, they became educators, nurses, administrators and nonordained ministers. In many instances they became financially and psycho-spiritually freed up from institutional constraints. As such their contribution to the life of the Church has been monumental. Some moved into conflict and later into noncanonical relationships with the institution as they provided models for ecclesiastical alternatives.

The theological scene itself, that is, the seminaries, divinity schools and university faculties of theology, as well as the professional societies such as the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature remained virtually unchanged in content and constituency until the mid 1960's. Women were earning academic and professional degrees and beginning to trickle into the faculty and administrative ranks, but the public face of theology remained as white and male as ever.

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The publication of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique in 1963 began a revolution in the secular society which was not felt in the theological world until some time later.[10] But the effects were clear as the connections between church and home oppression were made by theologically trained women (and sensitive men in the field). Change was inevitable. The theological ranks were bound to open up, after the fashion of medicine, law and other professions. The nature of the theological task, namely, the focus on the questions of ultimate meaning and value, and the deeply rooted patriarchal tradition made resistence strong but determination even stronger.

In 1960 Valerie Saiving Goldstein issued a fundamental challenge to theological and anthropological assumptions in her article "The Human Situation: A Feminine View."[11] She argued that Reinhold Niebuhr's notion that Jesus came to save all men from sins of pride was in fact true. That is, it is true that most sins which men commit are sins of arrogance, the misuse of power, hubris of many kinds. But, the same claim cannot be made automatically for women. At least it cannot be made for women in a culture where women have unequal access to the sources of power. Rather, using this analysis one sees that women are guilty of sins of a quite opposite sort, namely, "triviality, distractibility, and diffuseness; lack of an organizing center or focus; dependence on other for one's self-definition..."[12] Consequently it is at least an open question whether Jesus came to save women as well as men. It is probably a good guess that Christianity will be profoundly altered by a look at this contradiction.

The power of Goldstein's insight rests not so much on her accuracy in describing women's experience, though for many white middle

class women it may be a fair rendering. Rather, it rests with her insight into the nature of the human situation. In a culture which makes a clear distinction between women and men, therefore between female experience and male experience, it is impossible to base universal claims on particular experience. It is simply faulty analysis to conclude that what it means to be human can be understood by what it means to be male.

Goldstein's insight is the key to revisionist feminist work. It is a necessary first step toward constructing a theology which is worthy of the label 'human.' A feminist dubito results: I doubt 'he' means me, therefore she is and we are. What follows then is a complete rethinking of the theological categories and concepts, first from the perspective of women's experience, then from male experience revised in light of women's experience and finally from the perspective of human experience which is informed by both of these perspectives. Goldstein's insight has been explored and deepened by Judith Plaskow. However, it remains the first hint of a major theological challenge about the self-conscious difference between women's and men's experience.

The history of Feminist theology which shows the evolution beyond gender based analysis continued through a series of conferences which brought together theologically trained women for communal reflection. In 1971 a conference was held at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at which women theologians from around the country shared insights and produced communal papers.[13] The next year women at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California worked together on a course which culminated in Women and the Word, a book of essays and reflections which was widely used to spark other groups to engage

in their own theologizing.[14] Church Women United sponsored "Women Exploring Theology at Grailville" in 1972, another national gathering.[15] At Grailville academic and ministerial distinctions began to disappear as women began to understand how crucial both elements are for our collective work.

These meetings, unique in their living/learning models and self-directed approach to theological education, were the beginnings of a network of feminists in religion. Seminary Quarter at Grailville was a direct offshoot. It included a program for women in ministry as well as women in theological education. It provided an opportunity for academic and professional women to reflect together, celebrate new liturgies, test out new theological concepts and experiment with new approaches to belief.

On the purely academic side the formation of a women's caucus at the American Academy of Religion meetings in 1972 provided a much needed forum for shared research in Feminist theology. It became an organizational platform from which women could begin to challenge the discipline on its own terms, and it strengthened the networking which had already begun among the relatively small number of women in faculty positions.

Mary Daly's book The Church and the Second Sex, originally published in 1968, sparked the feminist conversation on both the Roman Catholic and ecumenical fronts.[16] Daly claimed that Christianity, especially Catholicism, is the source and reinforcer of patriarchy. By patriarchy Daly meant the result of the normative value placed on maleness in our society which excludes the full expression of femaleness. The consequent oppression of women is economic, social, emotional and

spiritual. Patriarchy is a social-structural expression, just as racism is a social-structural result of the normative value which is placed on white skin in our culture to the exclusion of the full expression of persons who have brown, black or yellow skin.

According to Daly the Church is "helping to perpetuate the enslavement (of women) after science has made liberation possible."[17] Daly assailed the historical and political contradictions in the Church, and assessed the various functions of nuns, women priests and secular women. She concluded on an optimistic, not to say conciliatory, note by pointing to "a summons into the future" which invites all Christians, women as well as men, into transformed times.[18] With the initial publishing of The Church and The Second Sex (note it was later published with a "New Feminist Post-Christian Introduction by the Author" in which Daly succeeded in repudiating any hint of optimism[19]) Daly threw down the gauntlet for Christianity, though the implications of her challenge were not clear (perhaps even to her) until years later.

Heartened by this optimism and compelled by Daly's clarifying account of their own lives after Vatican II many women began to realize that it is possible and necessary to criticize and challenge the Church without leaving the institution. Volumes were published on the place of women in the institutional Church (cf. Women's Liberation and the Church edited by Sarah Bentley Doely and Sexist Religion and Women in the Church edited by Alice Hageman[20]). Strides were made in various denominations on the ordination of women to the priesthood and the ministry. Most mainline Protestant denominations allowed ordination by the mid 1970's. Even the Lutherans (not Missouri Synod) and Episcopal churches eventually changed their traditional stances and allowed women to

receive Holy Orders. However, the Roman Catholic Church remains, at this writing, firmly entrenched in its traditional position.

New theological expressions were offered. For example, Sheila Collins, in A Different Heaven and Earth, formulated the notion of 'theologizing' as a way to bypass the static language and imagery of traditional theology in favor of a communal sharing of faith experience and a communal articulation of women's religious sense.[21]

Theologizing, as Collins defined it, parallels consciousness-raising models which became de rigeur in many academic and urban settings. Women were finally sitting together without motherly demands and wifely expectations (childcare and equal sharing of workloads in marriages were major topics) and "hearing each other into speech" as Nelle Morton described the unique way women speak our deepest concerns.[22] By sharing life stories and struggles, reading women's literature and becoming involved in feminist projects like shelters for battered women and rape crisis lines, women were able to ask/answer questions of ultimate meaning and value (i.e., to theologize) in ways heretofore considered unscientific, anti-intellectual and otherwise unsatisfactory.

From these experiences the theologically trained could begin to chronicle and articulate women's side of the theological coin. What became increasingly obvious was the such gatherings provided plenty of raw data for reflection. Such gatherings often produced the rationale for the praxis or action component of social change from a feminist perspective. Although the theologizing groups tended to be college educated, indeed theologically sophisticated women, they were more than simply support groups and often sought an ever wider inclusion of experiences.

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The women's community became more reality than catchphrase, replacing church and school for many women as the support system needed to challenge and revitalize selves and structures. The community was usually 'women only'; for a time in some places it was purposely separatist. However, the separatism was only momentary, time enough for women to renew and regroup in light of fresh understandings. Then slowly men could begin to benefit from our time alone. We could return to all persons with the integrity which comes from an oppressed group bonding on its own terms.

The separatism was limited lest another false generic arise, lest a turning of the tables happen so that female instead of male experience be elevated to universality. Feminists have argued that this table turning is impossible since we live in a culture which is so thoroughly male dominated that even with serious efforts it will take decades, perhaps a century, to begin to correct the male-skewed collective unconscious.

However, some feminists appear to have fallen into this trap from the other side by functioning in theological discourse as if there were a monolithic way of being female, a least common denominator of women's experience. This is corrected by the inclusion of Black and Third World women, by the diversification of theologizing groups to include more than only professionally trained white women in all feminist theologizing. Alternatively, groups of white, academic women are called upon to theologize out of their own experience, but to name such experience in its specificity so as to limit the claims which they make. The real feminist insight is not into the nature and value of female experience per se, but into the nature and value of particular

experience as it is found in conjunction with other particular experiences. Particularity and not femininity is key.

Early feminist theological writings seemed to place a priority on the female bonding which results from an awareness of women's oppression. But as groups met over long periods of time and as women gained some perspective on sexism they were able to articulate how being Black or coming from a working class family or understanding oneself as a lesbian in a heterosexist environment caused different forms of oppression.

Women began to realize that the relatively easy bonding as women must not mask the real differences. It is this realization that is the other side of the insight into particularity mentioned above, namely, the interstructured network of oppression which keeps women estranged from one another. The subtle ways in which this interstructuring operates need to be unearthed. This project seems to me to have the most potential for pushing Feminist theology in new directions and to new depths. It will need more than the current feminist tools to handle the work. Feminist Liberation theology is my proposal for a method which will help us approach these issues.

Academic work continued in both theology and religious studies. The publication of women's papers and articles through the American Academy of Religion[23] and the sharing of historical work done from a feminist perspective began to shed light on the inequities which women have experienced in the institutional Church. More recently historians have been investigating the positive side of this history, namely, the role that women played in the Church understood as the People of God as well as the institution. These scholars argue that although women

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have been excluded and trivialized they have nonetheless made substantial contributions.[24]

This historical perspective, combined with theological sensitivities, led scholars to make academic connections between the development and legitimation of patriarchy with class struggle, racism, heterosexism, imperialism, etc. Further, it led to an awareness of men as victims as well as oppressors, though there is great difference among feminists as to how this reality should be articulated. For example, Mary Daly makes a major case for the ontological nature of maleness, i.e., maleness as the root of other forms of evil. Rosemary Ruether, on the other hand, argues that patriarchy is one of many interstructured forms of oppression which affect various people and groups. This issue remains unresolved and forms a conceptual bottomline for feminist analysis.[25] My own position is close to Ruether's since I am interested not in isolating one factor but in looking at the entire scope of evil via the various entrees which different forms of oppression allow.

Mary Daly's second book reflects her position on evil. Beyond God the Father, published in 1973, was based on sources which are properly termed feminist theory.[26] This reliance on feminist theory set up a reciprocal relationship with other feminist scholars. For example, Adrienne Rich and Susan Griffin seem to share Daly's presupposition on evil and rely heavily on her work.[27] The writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Janice Raymond, Elizabeth Gould Davis, Charlotte Bunch, etc. are part of the growing body of feminist theory. Interest in topics like witchcraft and sisterhood and historical investigations of concepts like the Great Goddess and Matriarchy have common roots in feminist theory and feminist theology. New content from feminist theory, that

is from the development of historical, political and sociological sources written from a feminist perspective, added to and deepened Daly's earlier challenge to the churches. These challenges led Daly to the boundary and beyond, to the edge of the Church and out the door.

For the first time in Feminist theology there was a carefully if somewhat flamboyantly articulated challenge to the Churches. The fact that the situation had not changed appreciably since Vatican II coupled with the fact that women were still systematically excluded from leadership positions fueled Daly's analysis. But hers was a challenge deeper than simply the demand for equality. Daly's challenge was to the presence of women in any Church (note that in this dissertation 'Church' with a capital 'C' will always mean institutional church).

Mary Daly claimed that the Christian Church is dangerous to all women's health--spiritual and emotional--and urged women not to reinforce patriarchy by being involved with the organization which is its source. Dr. Daly argued in Beyond God the Father that patriarchy is the source of all evil, that the maleness of Jesus makes him inadequate as a universal salvation figure, and that sisterhood or the bonding of women is cosmic covenant. These elements of a feminist critique of theology continue to be debated both inside and outside feminist circles. Regardless of opinions of them, Mary Daly's challenge has been heard.

All feminist theology written since 1973 has been shaped in one way or another by Daly's challenge. Likewise, feminist theory has been shaped by the input of religious feminists like Daly so that the spiritual dimension of cultural analysis is taken seriously by women who are fighting against oppression. Daly presented an important option: the

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possibility of leaving the institutional Church. This gave unprecedented psycho-spiritual space and time to women (and men, though fewer perceived it).

Women no longer have to put up with the marginalization and trivialization which the Church offers. The doors are open so that those who choose to leave the Church may do so with a feasible alternative. For some this is the larger women's community; for others it is gynergetic spirituality. Only those who choose to remain inside the Church will do so and even they will remain with a new awareness of their marginality.

Note that the inside/outside distinction is a dubious one at best. All women are 'outside' a Church which does not grant us full stature. But at the same time women who have been brought up within the Christian tradition remain curiously inside even in their most vehement protests against it. A Jewish feminist theologian once remarked that she could tell that a particular feminist theologian was a Catholic despite her protestations to the contrary because of the arguments that she chose to dignify with a response when she was dealing with abortion.

Daly's book created a tremendous psychological freedom for women which was mirrored in the growth of postchristian and post-catholic support/liturgy groups. However, it did not handle the deeply rooted structures of faith which ground human experience and long to be fulfilled. Nor did it grapple seriously with the issues of economics and race which cast distinctive shadows on the decisions women make about staying in churches in which they were raised. For example, the Black Church has a social function far beyond its religious impact.

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For some Black women it represents home and family, roots in the Black community, in ways which are far more important to many than the contradictions raised by being a feminist and a Christian.

Religious life for Catholic women is another example of how factors other than the simply religious function in the decision making vis-a-vis participation in a patriarchal church. For many women, religious life meant upward mobility, access to education and privilege which would have been unavailable in their families. It also represented an alternative to marriage which was socially acceptable, in fact rewarded. Social position and bonding with other women are facets of religious life which encourage women to remain in an admittedly patriarchal Church. Nevertheless, Daly's challenge pressed even religious women to reevaluate the rechoose.

Many newly formed feminist groups tended to be made up of women of similar age, ethnic group, education and social background. This made for spirited discussion and convenient bonding around common interests. But these groups have had a limited though important structural impact. These groups, like Daly's work in many circles, have had an impact which has been more symbolically than existentially important. That is, many can see the importance of being "on the boundary," as Daly describes the relationship of women to the institutional Church, but they do not see that such a relationship means an immediate and complete abandonment of the Church.[29] They realize it means substantial critique and most are forced to rethink their commitments.

The choices which women make in the face of such evidence run the gamut from continuing to perform services necessary to keep the

institution running (e.g. secretarial work and teaching in parish schools) to refusing to darken the door of the institution and above all refusing to use their gifts for liturgy and worship. All of these, when understood as part of a concerted effort to change the status quo, can be useful. But it takes communication and mutual openness to strategize how each choice can help the other. For example, due to strained communications women who work in the Church often feel cut off from and judged by women who have nothing to do with the institution. Likewise some women who have formed covens or left their religious heritage sometimes long for community which the Church provides. Or they feel cut off from family and friends who still belong to the Church. Real differences do not have to be masked in order for human sharing to be sustained, but judgements have to be suspended, at least temporarily, if women are to work together.

Since the first flush of Beyond God the Father enthusiasm Feminist theology has been in increased dialogue with feminist theorists and socialist feminists. This is due to the fact that Daly's analysis was so cogent and compelling that it added a necessary dimension to the feminist cultural critique which only a theologically trained person could produce, and because it evoked from other women a recognition of their own deep spiritual longings.

These desires have been truncated by patriarchal spirituality which has had a monopoly on the market in recent years. Literary and musical works have been used as feminists begin to realize that the formation of one's spirituality must include substantial input from women's sources. Hence the writings of Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing, Marge Piercy and May Sarton are sources from feminist theologizing.[30]

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The music of Holly Near, Chris Williamson, Meg Christian, etc. expresses the depth of women's longings for a spirituality which is consonant with a renewed political understanding of the world.[31]

During the 1970's women continued this spiritual quest in the mainstream as well. Women make up about 60% of most congregations. They formed denominational task forces, study commissions and committees to evaluate gender exclusive language (i.e., language which uses 'man', 'he', 'him' to refer to all people and 'Father', 'Lord', 'Ruler' to refer to God), job opportunities for women and the future of institutionalized Christianity in a postfeminist era.

Theological ranks at the faculty level remain virtually sex segregated, although theological schools are approaching parity in enrollment. Even the Catholic seminaries are finding women interested in pursuing the professional credentials for ordination so as to prepare themselves fully for the ministry which lies ahead. However, the social movement of women in society is sufficiently advanced so that backlash can be detected. The same is true in seminaries and in the Church.

Disturbing trends are surfacing. For example, there is already a growing trend toward conservatism among young women entering seminary. Many take for granted the strides that have been made toward including feminist concerns in curriculum. Pressures to gain employment in a shrinking financial base prompt many women in seminary and graduate school to put aside feminist concerns rather than grapple with the issues which are life changing.

Funding is being cut back in areas where feminists (including nuns) are helping women to break out of the traditional teaching/

nursing roles in the Church. Recent firings in two denominations of women ministers who were honest about their sexual preference (i.e., they were lesbian) raised new suspicions about the negative mood which is ahead.

Feminist men like William Callahan, S.J. who was removed from his position as head of Priests for Equality are beginning to feel the pressure. The recent failure on the part of Catholic bishops to agree on inclusive language for the liturgy is another example of this trend. The Vatican pressure to remove Hans Küng from his teaching position at Tübingen and the declaration by the Vatican that he is no longer to be considered a Catholic theologian can not be seen apart from his stance in favor of the ordination of women.[32]

Ordination of Roman Catholic women has become a focal point for Catholic Feminist theology. There is general consensus that a "renewed priesthood" is the only feasible possibility, i.e., a priesthood which does not carry with it clericalism, celibacy and hierarchical ordering.[33] Papal pronouncements against the ordination of women have occasioned scholarly responses.[34] Now most scholars agree that there are no theological, but many political, reasons which stand in the way of ordination. The issue has brought women together in national and international meetings, and launched a movement which has the potential to develop coalitions with other groups working for justice.[35]

Renewed interest in symbols and history in Feminist theology has found clearest expression in what is called Gynergetic Spirituality.[36] This is woman-centered religion which takes a variety of forms, ranging from humanism to Wicca. It is expressed in the writings of the Womanspirit collective, especially in their chronicle of the

Gynergetic Spirituality Conference in 1976 at which hundreds of women shared their interests in herbal healing, vegetarianism, therapeutic massage, witchcraft, etc.[37] A recent conference, Goddess Emerging (1978), featured rituals and academic work.[38]

Much of the Gynergetic material is based on the assumption that before the birth of patriarchy there was a matriarchal culture in which women ruled and/or received equal treatment. Evidence of this historical period remains shaky, but the movement has proved to be an important counterweight to patriarchal religion as well as a healthy outlet for feminist religious creativity.

Starhawk, founder of two covens and minister of the Covenant of the Goddess Church, describes the resurgence of witchcraft.[39] She claims it is "not theology" but "a religion of poetry."[40] She writes about the mysteries of the cosmos which are inexpressable in words, but which can be experienced through ritual and symbol. She answers feminist detractors' questions about the seemingly apolitical nature of such groups by saying that:

> Theologians familiar with Judeo-Christian concepts sometimes have trouble understanding how a religion such as Witchcraft can develop a system of ethics and a concept of justice. If there is no split between spirit and nature, no concept of sin, no covenant or commandments against which one can sin, how can people be ethical? By what standards can they judge their actions, when the external judge is removed from his place as ruler of the cosmos? And if the Goddess is immanent in the world, why work for change or strive toward an ideal? Why not bask in the perfection of divinity?[41]

I find Starhawk's message intriguing but inadequate, although I find her presentation the most cogent one to emerge thus far from this strand of Feminist theology. But nowhere do I find a straight-

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forward acknowledgment of the systemic evils which plague, Goddess notwithstanding, Rather, I find a privatized sense of religion:

> Witchcraft is not a religion of masses--of any sort. Its structure is cellular, based on covens, small groups of up to thirteen members that allow for both communal sharing and individual independence.[42]

It is this privatization which leads me to suspect that such groups will not have a tremendous impact on social structures, much less the institutional Church.

New rituals and communities which challenge the institutional Church by their very existence have grown out of gynergetic gatherings. Their failings notwithstanding, these groups have been able to function as support and growth groups for women who are disenchanted with the Christian and Jewish alternatives. However, they run the risk of falling back into rigid patterns at times when the Goddess is reified and/or charismatic leaders hold sway in opportunistic fashion.

Most disturbing in this sector is the tendency mentioned above to take a seemingly apolitical attitude toward cultural questions, passing over race and class issues without substantial analysis of how these key variables affect women's individual and group experiences. Hopefully the strength of this sector which is its attention to and sophistication around symbols and rituals will eventually be coupled with the more refined social analysis of other sectors of Feminist theology.

Less sensational but equally important has been the steady churning out of books and articles by feminist scholars. Historians like Dorothy Bass and Elaine Pagels continue to chip away at misconceptions.[43] Biblical scholars like Phyllis Trible and Elizabeth Schüsseler Fiorenza have opened the way to new exegesis.[44] These interpreters clarify the role of women in the Bible, as well as women

in the body of salvation history since the time of Jesus.

Foundational and systematic studies from a feminist perspective have been less abundant. Rosemary Ruether's New Woman, New Earth and Sheila Collins' A Different Heaven and Earth are the only substantial constructive pieces.[46] Similarly, Naomi Goldenberg's Changing of the Gods raises some fundamental challenges, albeit using more psychological than theological evidence.[47]

The history of Feminist theology would not be complete without a mention of work done by evangelical women such as Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni.[50] Their books tend to be too biblically based for many feminists and too feminist for many evangelicals. Nevertheless they represent the feminist fringe of evangelical women who are beginning to contend with the contradictions which abound in a patriarchal religion.[51] Similar bridging has been done in the mainline denominations by Letty M. Russell whose Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective was considered too radical by some church folks and "cheap grace" by most feminist theologians.

We have the beginnings of cross cultural work being done in Feminist theology. World Religions scholars like Jane I. Smith, Wendy O'Flaherty and Rita Gross are beginning to publish materials on women in other major world religions from a feminist perspective. Denise Carmody has published an introductory reader in which she sketches what will hopefully be fleshed out by other scholars, namely, the implications of feminist awareness in major traditions.[55]

Few of the New Religious Movements have taken a feminist perspective seriously. It seems clear from preliminary research I have done that even those groups which have arisen since the onset of the

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Women's Movement in the late 1960's continue to treat women in much the same way as the mainline culture and denominations.

Mary Daly's latest contribution, Gyn/Ecology, brings us up to date with and pushes us beyond most of the literature surveyed. Gyn/Ecology is a monumental work in which Daly examines the various atrocities which women experience.[48] These include Indian Suttee, Chinese Foot-binding, African Genital Mutilation, European Witchburning and American Gynecology. She offers a framework which she calls "Pattern of the Sado-Ritual Syndrome," arguing that all oppression of women takes place, to one degree or another, within a pattern which includes the erasure of responsibility by those who oppress, the use of women as torturers of each other, and the legitimation of such actions by objective scholarship, etc.[49] Dr. Daly refers to her work as "A Meta-ethics for Radical Feminism" but it is clear that she still sees the institutional Church as the paradigm for other models of oppression. Daly's work in meta-ethics or feminist theory provides us with additional conceptual apparatus with which to evaluate our situations.

Many feminist theologians concern themselves with activist projects inside and outside of church circles. Their writings tend not to be found in literature surveys since their primary work is not in the academe. Rather, their writings are found in journals instead of in book forms. They are in great demand as lecturers and preachers since they speak from their experience. Anne McGrew Bennett, peace activist and feminist theologian, is a good example. She spelled out "Some Implications of the Woman Movement" and has done extensive work especially in mainline denominations on God-language.[53] Renny Golden, educator, poet and prison activist is another example. She raises

issues of race and class by focusing on the economic picture in "Which Women's Liberation?"[54] These are but two of the praxis-based feminists who are creating new forms of theology and implementing new methods.

A similar review of the literature could have been accomplished by isolating the various issues with which feminist theologians have concerned themselves. These range from God-language and Goddess imagery to Christian misogyny and the nature of female experience, from Christology and abortion to socialism and ordination. They are found in the major works of Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Sheila Collins as well as in journals, liturgical celebrations and feminist newspapers. It is difficult to catalogue these issues adequately without missing the nuances which accompany each. But the task must be done if we are to have an overview of the field from which to derive our methodology.

In attempting this task I rejected the traditional theological categories beginning with creation and ending with salvation. I rejected this framework (although the reader will note than my schema is influenced significantly by it) because it seems to bypass experience and proceed from certain Christian a prioris which limit the possibility for significant nonchristian or nontraditionally Christian material to be taken seriously.

I also rejected the standard feminist schematization which lists not issues but theologians. This format makes some easy assumptions about who is at the greatest remove from the institutional Church and who is closest to the Church (usually Letty Russell and evangelical women are in the latter category, and Mary Daly and Goddess worshippers in the former). Everyone else is placed on the continuum between these

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two poles.[56] Not only does this approach rely on the implicit assumption that distance from the Church is desirable, somehow 'more feminist' but it tends to collapse positions into arbitrary categories. It leaves out major portions of the women's community.[57]

In an earlier version of this work I experimented with classifying the major issues of Feminist theology using Mary Daly's "Pattern of the Sado-Ritual Syndrome."[58] I thought perhaps Daly had discovered a pattern which would work not only for the syndrome but also for the attempts to remedy it by creating new concepts as feminist theologians have done. I realized that this was not the case, specifically that the creative edge of Feminist theology can not be captured in the old patterns. Hence I have abandoned this model and instead offer one of my own.

I propose that we look at clusters of issues rather than at preconceived categories, theologians' distances from the institutional Church or patterns so as to eventually set up a model for viewing different feminist approaches. Only then can we discern a method, however, general, which seems common to many approaches. By doing so we will move <u>inductively</u> from clusters of issues to general elements which will make up a method. This is distinct from the method in Liberation theology where we will move <u>deductively</u> from general aspects to particular issues.

I have clustered Feminist theology around five major concepts. These are not meant to be exhaustive lists. Rather, they are meant to provide an outline of the variety of issues which have been addressed.

DIVINITY- God, the critical principle of all that is is not gender specific
Goddess is a useful concept for critiquing traditional understandings of divinity and for exploring historical

background for new images
Jesus is problematic as a savior figure since his maleness has been used as the paradigm for full humanity (therefore for priesthood)
Mary is humanity's link to divinity though being virgin and mother she is an impossible role model
Language about God reflects the ruling class of society, in our case, white, upper class males
New images of God, perhaps even new epiphanies, depend on the inclusion of previously unmentioned experience

HUMANITY- Woman is the full embodiment of humanity just as man embodies full humanity
Woman is the source of new knowledge about humanity which men can share in when they recognize their feminine elements
Child bearing and child rearing are corporate responsibilities
Woman and man are both body and spirit
Women need to speak the truth of their lives; today's witches are tomorrow's prophets
Abortion, homosexuality, marriage need to be rethought in light of this new anthropology

WORLD- Nature is part of creation; it is to be revered
Woman and nature are to be celebrated not exploited
History has been distorted by male bias and needs to be retold
The Future is open to new models
Religion has a privileged place in culture which makes it responsible for redressing the biases in questions of ultimate meaning and value

THEOLOGY- The discipline has been based on male experience
New models for theologizing based on a variety of experiences
Wholistic approaches using sociology, linguistics, literature, the arts, music as well as philosophy and history are needed
Reinterpretation of Scripture according to a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion is in progress
The task of theology is not simply to understand God in the world but to facilitate the healing/saving presence of God changing unjust power relationships

LIBERATION- Preconditions for the possibility of the reign of God can be developed
Unjust social structures must be corrected
Christian Churches have the mandate to denounce powers and principalities
Correction of power imbalances will usher in liberation

While the clusters are not definitive they provide a systematic approach to issues. The underlying power question, i.e., who controls

history, images, social structures, etc. can be seen throughout.

Using this schema as a starting point we can select a cluster of issues and assess the ways feminist theologians have approached it. For example, we can discern a variety of approaches to the question of Divinity. These can be broken down into various positions:

| | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Personal Male | Personal Male/Female | Polytheistic |
| 2. | Jesus as Savior | Jesus as Brother | Jesus as one among many avatars |
| 3. | Spirit as founder of the Christian Churches | Spirit as guarantee of change for justice | Spirit as one among many spirits |

| | D | E |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Non-personal | Personal Female |
| 2. | Jesus as interesting historical figure | Swinging Single on the Cross |
| 3. | Spirit as presence of the holy in the world | WomanSpirit |

Few feminist theologians would fit neatly into any one of the above columns. The point is that feminists are not only of many minds on issues but each one looks at theological questions from many angles. For example, Mary Daly might affirm 2E and 3E but reject 1E in favor of 1D (e.g. Ground of Being). Similarly, I would accept 1D, 2B and 3A,B,C,D and E. This is not to say that we are a schizophrenic lot (Karen Lebacqz's lecture on Feminist Theology notwithstanding)[59]. It is to say that we are evolving away from rigidly adhered to systems and toward more richly constituted positions. We are moving in the direction of faith seeking action, of hope being actualized and of love

finding concrete expression in the world.

In order to continue this development, indeed in order to understand and justify it we rely on method. As Bernard Lonergan noted, "Method is not a set of rules to be followed meticulously by a dolt. It is a framework for collaborative creativity."[60] Among feminists method is not an often discussed topic. In fact, I know of no treatment of this topic either from within the ranks of feminist theologians or from outside as a criticism of their work from the viewpoint of method.

What I describe here is at most a formula for how we proceed and at least an impression of how we have been moving. This method, as well as the method of Liberation theology, gives us a hint at an adequate method for the '80's since it is from these two sets of speculation that significant new sets of theological concepts have emerged.

The method of Feminist theology includes the following elements:

1. communal starting point in personal experience of oppression
2. critique of prevailing sources and structures on the basis of newly arrived at consciousness
3. recasting of concepts using customary sources (e.g. Scripture and Tradition) under a hermeneutics of suspicion as well as the data of the social sciences, literature, art, music, etc.
4. ever expanding horizon of persons and concerns which keep the process moving.

These four elements result in action which, because it is based on analysis outside the usual structures, tends to bring more oppression in its wake. This starts the process all over again, with renewed input.

Let me follow an issue through the four steps in order to illustrate the methodology. The ordination of Roman Catholic women is

an issue which I have written about using this method.[61]

First, as a woman who is theologically and ministerially prepared for ordination I find that I and other women who are similarly prepared are systematically denied the opportunity to test our vocations. This denial is based solely on gender. This denial constitutes oppression (1). In conversation and collaborative scholarship we critique the theological tracts and the institutional structures and functionaries from a feminist perspective (2). That is, we criticize not only the injustice which we experience, but also the exclusion of gay men, noncelibates, etc. from the priesthood.

We begin to examine the larger picture and see that ordination to the clerical, celibate, hierarchical priesthood is not what we want. We evaluate sociological studies, reflect on scriptural passages on ministry, read the stories of women in ministry in other denominations and look at the women who have served in our own tradition. We conclude that a renewed priesthood is a prerequisite for our participation (3).

Finally, we take the insight which comes with our own exclusion and apply it to whole classes of persons in the Church (4). For example, we see how Hispanics are alienated from the North American Church by its thoroughly Anglo culture. Then we learn about Basic Christian Communities in Latin America and begin to understand that we too can leave behind the parish ministry model upon which the priesthood we are rejecting is based. We ask a new question: What kind of ministers do people need? We are back to the experience of oppression when we join these marginalized folks and the cycle begins again.

The example shows two important aspects of any method. First,

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it must be adequate to the constant need for new content to emerge. As we can see in the ordination example the fourth element, the ever expanding horizon of persons and concerns, produced a whole new content issue, namely, the Basic Christian Communities, which relativized the ordination question.

Second, a method is intimately connected with its content. In the example above the second step, the critique of prevailing sources, included a look at Scripture and Tradition because Feminist theology is rooted in the Christian tradition. It included the stories of other women in ministry (rather than examples of the struggling poor as would be the case in Liberation theology, or examples of women saints or Mary as would be the case in traditional theology) because Feminist theology is rooted in a consciousness-raising model.

More discussion of the method of Feminist theology will be included in chapter 5 when it is compared with the method of Liberation theology. At this point we have traced the history of Feminist theology, clustered the major issues and abstracted a methodological schema. We have seen how the method works and found that it does indeed produce new content. By looking at Liberation theology in a similar fashion we will have a basis of comparison and a partner for collaboration as we formulate a theological method adequate for the '80's.

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## NOTES

## CHAPTER 2

[1]John B. Cobb, Jr. "A Critical View of Inherited Theology," The Christian Century, Vol. XCVII, No. 6, February 20, 1980, p. 196.

[2]There have been a number of feminist theological gatherings and some publications in other countries. For example, the Lutheran World Federation has a Women's Desk as does the World Council of Churches. Both have sponsored international meetings as has the World Student Christian Federation. Also, a number of publications have carried Feminist theology including Movement, the magazine of the Irish Student Christian Movement. However, for purposes of this work I have confined myself to the history of Feminist theology in the United States. A discussion of the entire movement internationally is more properly the subject of a separate study. This is not to say that the international developments have been unimportant to the United States development. It is fair to say that international developments have not played a major role, regrettably, in North American feminism.

[3]Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 382.

[4]Carol Adams, Dunkirk, New York, Fall 1979, personal correspondence.

[5]Matilda Joslyn Gage, Woman, Church and State: A Historical Account of Women Throughout the Christian Ages with Reminiscences of the Matriarchate (Chicago: C.H. Kerr, 1893).

[6]Ibid.

[7]Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Woman's Bible (Seattle: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1974 (1895)).

[8]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[9]Georgia Elma Harkness is a remarkable example of a Methodist theologian whose prolific writing rarely found its way into theological bibliographies. Her Conflicts in Religious Thought (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1929) and Christian Ethics (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957) are substantial pieces. Her poetry, prayers and hymns have been used widely for devotional purposes.

One of her last works, Women in Church and Society (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972) indicates her movement from being a woman theologian to being a theologian who wrote about the position of women.

[10]Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Norton, 1963).



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[11]Valerie Saiving (Goldstein), "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," Journal of Religion, April 1960. Also reprinted in Womanspirit Rising, edited by Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

[12]Saiving, "Human Situation" In Womanspirit Rising, p. 37.

[13]Unpublished papers from this conference are available from Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

[14]Women and the Word: Toward a Whole Theology (Berkeley, Ca.: Office of Women's Affairs (Center for Women and Religion), Graduate Theological Union, 1972).

[15]"Women Exploring Theology at Grailville," Loveland, Ohio, June 18-25, 1972.

[16]Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex (New York: Harper and Row, 1968 (1975)).

[17]Ibid., p. 65.

[18]Ibid., p. 222.

[19]Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex With a New Feminist Postchristian Introduction by the Author (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

[20]Sarah Bentley Doely, Women's Liberation and the Church (New York: Association Press, 1970); Sexist Religion and Women in the Church; No More Silence! (New York: Association Press, 1974).

[21]Sheila Collins, A Different Heaven and Earth (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1974).

[22]Nelle Morton, "Beloved Image" in Perspectives on Feminist Theology, edited by Mary E. Hunt and Rosino Gibellini, (Brescia, Italy: Queriniana, 1980).

[23]Judith Plaskow and Joan Arnold Romero, editors, Women and Religion, papers of the Working Group on Women and Religion 1972-73, revised edition, AAR, (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1974); Rita Gross, editor, Beyond Androcentrism (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977).

[24]Rosemary Radford Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, editors, Women of Spirit (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

[25]Cf. Carter Heyward, "Ruether and Daly: Theologians Speaking, Sparking, Building and Burning," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. 39, No. 5, April 2, 1979, pp. 66-72.

[26]Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

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[27]Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (New York: Norton, 1976); On Lies, Secrets and Silence (New York: Norton, 1979). Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

[28]Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Knopf, 1957 (1952)); Elizabeth Gould Davis, The First Sex (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973 (1971)); Charlotte Bunch, "Self Definition and Political Survival," Quest, Washington, D.C., Vol. I, No. 3, Winter 1975, pp. 2-15 and "Beyond Either/Or: Feminist Options," Quest, Washington, D.C., Vol. III, No. 1, Summer 1976, pp. 2-17; Janice Raymond, The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

[29]Daly, Beyond God the Father, pp. 55-56.

[30]Carol P. Christ has detailed the literary issues in Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979). Among the most popular sources are: Margaret Atwood, Surfacing (New York: Popular Library, 1976); Doris Lessing, Four-Gated City (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969); Marge Piercy, Small Changes (New York: Fawcette, 1978) and May Sarton, Journal of a Solitude (New York: Norton, 1977) and A Reckoning (New York: Norton, 1978).

[31]Among feminist musicians the most widely used for theologizing and liturgy are: Holly Near, "Imagine My Surprise," Ukiah, Ca.: Redwood Records, 1978 and "You Can Know All I Am," Ukiah, Ca.: Redwood Records, 1976; Meg Christian, "Face the Music," Los Angeles: Olivia Records, 1977 and Chris Williamson, "The Changer and the Changed," Los Angeles: Olivia Records, 1975.

[32]Hans Küng, Signposts for the Future (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1978), p. 158.

[33]Mary E. Hunt, "Roman Catholic Ministry: Patriarchal Past, Feminist Future," Baltimore: Second Women's Ordination Conference, November, 1978.

[34]Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler, Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

[35]Women's Ordination Conference, 34 Monica Street, Rochester, N.Y. 14619; cf. WOC Newsletter and conference proceedings.

[36]The term "Gynergy" was coined by Emily Culpepper. Cf. her essay "The Spiritual Movement of Radical Feminist Consciousness," in Understanding the New Religions, Jacob Needleman and George Baker, editors (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978).

[37]Womanspirit is a periodical published by the Womanspirit Collective, Grants Pass, Oregon.

[38]Cf. Heresies, Spring 1978 "The Great Goddess" especially Merlin Stone, "The Three Faces of Goddess Spirituality," pp. 2-4 and Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," pp. 8-13.

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[39]Starhawk, The Spiral Dance (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

[40]Ibid., p. 7.

[41]Ibid., p. 11.

[42]Ibid., p. 13.

[43]Dorothy Bass, American Women in Church and Society 1607-1920: A Bibliography (New York: Auburn Program at Union Theological Seminary, 1973); Elaine H. Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels (New York: Random House, 1979).

[44]Phyllis Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Women in the Pre-Pauline and Pauline Churches," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. XXXIII, Nos., 3-4 (Spring and Summer 1978), pp. 153-166.

A dissertation of feminist approaches to Scripture remains to be written. Phyllis Trible's attempt to develop a biblical hermeneutics for feminism has resulted in the following cogent position:

> Clearly the patriarchal stamp of scripture is permanent. But just as clearly, interpretation of its content is forever changing since new occasions teach us new duties and context alter texts, liberating them from frozen constructions. (p. 7)

My use of Scripture in Feminist Liberation Theology will be with this hermeneutical position in mind.

[45]Leonard Swidler's Biblical Affirmations of Women (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979) is a useful compendium written from a feminist perspective.

[46]Rosemary Radford Ruether, New Woman, New Earth (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); Sheila Collins, A Different Heaven and Earth (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1974).

[47]Naomi Goldenberg, Changing of the Gods (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

[48]Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology.

[49]Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology, pp. 130-133.

[50]Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Women, Men and the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977). Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1974).

[51]A conference of Evangelical Women was held in Pasadena, California in June 1978. Many of these issues were addressed for the first time.

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[52]Letty M. Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).

[53]Anne McGrew Bennett, "Some Theological Implications of the Women's Movement," in Perspectives on Feminist Theology, edited by Mary E. Hunt and Rosino Gibellini (Brescia, Italy: Queriniana, 1980).

[54]Renny Golden, "Which Women's Liberation?" in Perspectives on Feminist Theology, edited by Mary E. Hunt and Rosino Gibellini (Brescia, Italy: Queriniana, 1980).

[55]Denise Lardner Carmody, Women and World Religions (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

[56]Cf. Carol P. Christ, "Symbols of Goddess and God in Feminist Theology," a paper delivered at the Conference on Women and Religion, Hawaii, July 1978, for a good example of an essentially dubious approach.

[57]This tendency is evident in the introductory remarks and in the selection of essays in Womanspirit Rising, edited by Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow,(San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

[58]Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology, pp. 130-133.

[59]Karen Lebacqz, "Feminist Ethics: A Schizophrenic Witness," Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, GTU Faculty Lecture, November 1979.

[60]Bernard Lonergan, Method in Theology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. XI.

[61]Mary E. Hunt, "Roman Catholic Ministry: Patriarchal Past, Feminist Future."

## CHAPTER 3

## LIBERATION THEOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

> I have sacrificed poetry to give myself to the tasks of the struggle of my people... Revolution is a Christian priestly struggle.
>
> Ernesto Cardenal
> Latinamerica Press Nov. 9, 1978

> Yahweh, who does what is right,
> is always on the side of the oppressed.
>
> Psalm 103:6

Liberation theology signals the start of "a truly autochthonous church" in Latin America.[1] It is the first fruits of theologizing by a people who had formerly been tied, both pastorally and theologically, to Rome and to the Western European ways of expressing faith. With Medellín, the meeting of the Latin American bishops in 1968 the term "Liberation theology" began to gain widespread recognition.[2] By 1980 it boasts a substantial bibliography and a variety of uses.

I have chosen Liberation theology as the other component of my contemporary theological content for a number of reasons. First, it challenges the discipline to understand itself in new ways which will become obvious in my remarks on method. Second, it is the expression of a people who have been silent heretofore, and as such it promises new content. Third, it is a development which relies on the historical moment to shape its course, and as such coincides with feminist attempts to respond to the situations which demand prophecy. Finally, I have chosen Liberation theology as the companion to Feminist theology in

this study because the people who are engaged in this mode of theologizing impress me as folks with an urgency to make sense of their lives.

This urgency I take to be the work of the Spirit in our time. It has been in 'doing' this type of theology from a feminist perspective that I have found expression for my own questions of ultimate meaning and value.

It was easier to define Liberation theology in 1968 than it is now, and surely easiest of all in 1971 when Gustavo Gutiérrez published A Theology of Liberation in Peru.[3] Currently the term is a theological buzzword which is used to describe a variety of struggles for justice and full personhood. Let me isolate a primary and a secondary usage so that my meaning will be clear.

I have used the term thus far in this work, and I will continue to use it with a capital 'L,' in its primary Latin American sense. It denotes that brand of theologizing which has sprung up in the last fifteen years as a self-consciously Latin American response to and enlargement upon oppressive political situations. The focus of this kind of theologizing is the release of persons from the bondage of unjust social situations and in so doing the expression of the saving presence of God in the world.

The application of this theme (and of the methodology which accompanies it) to a variety of situations of oppression has become popular. Hence we have liberation theology in its secondary sense which I will signal by a lower case 'l.' This usage includes theology done by Blacks, feminists, gays, Asians, Africans, etc. all of which share some of the methodological aspects I will outline later. But we must be careful not to collapse everything into this category since some of

these are more properly called strategic and/or indigenous rather than liberation theologies, especially those which simply add their native content to Western European categories, for instance.

In the initial stages of this study I did not think that such a usage was very important for the question of method. Now I realize that the term is popular in the United States to refer to responses to Latin American Liberation theology and that Latin American theologians are beginning to take such materials into account in the shaping of their own programs. This cross-fertilization between the primary and secondary uses makes a mention of the secondary usage necessary to the complete understanding of the primary usage. The history of Liberation theology in the primary sense will lead into a history of the usage in the secondary sense.

Liberation theology traces its roots to Vatican II where Council members affirmed the need to bring the seemingly medieval church into the modern world. This task required fresh approaches to doctrine, Scripture, liturgy and social action. For example, post-conciliar documents like Pope Paul VI's Popolorum Progressio (especially par. 49) contained strong and clear statements about the relationship between rich and poor (see also par. 54), a common theme in Liberation theology.

For many Liberation theologians trained in Europe "academic theology" of the sort that had previously been exported to the Third World

> is a disinterested activity which finds its justification in itself and feels no need to find reasons for its existence. It considers itself to be just as universal as the train of thought in which it believes.[4]

Academic theology, even if written from Latin American academic institutions,

does not provide enough connection to the daily lives of most Christians to satisfy Latin American theologians that their work is Gospel-based. Therefore they see that the universal claims of academic theology need to be revised.

Liberation theologians were aware of more than the proddings of Vatican II when they formulated their early work. They were influenced by Political theology, especially the writings of Johannes Metz. For example, Gustavo Gutiérrez studied with Metz at Lyon and learned Rahner's theology of secularization from him.[5] The Death of God movement cannot be traced as easily in their thinking, primarily because it was a North American phenomenon. But insofar as Metz, Moltmann and others were influenced by its sweeping claims it was incorporated in the background of Liberation theology.

Biographical data on the most prominent of these theologians (e.g. Hugo Assman, Leonardo Boff, Enrique Dussel, Gustavo Gutiérrez and Juan Luis Segundo) reveals that their early training was in Western Europe, primarily in Germany, Italy and Belgium.[6] We can conclude that Liberation theology did not always begin with praxis, but began with the intersection of praxis and academic intellectual constructs. The early work was strongly influenced by the prevailing theological models. For instance, Joseph Powers has traced the roots of Gutiérrez' work in the theology of Karl Rahner and Eduard Schillebeeckx via the political theology of Metz.[7] The same could be done for Segundo whose roots are in Metz and Moltmann, and for Boff whose roots are in Rahner. Few of the Liberation theologians studied in the United States, with the exception of José Miguez Bonino, so it would be inaccurate to place much emphasis on the Social Gospel tradition as a backdrop for Liberation theology.

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Outside of the theological circles we find a number of influences on the Liberation theologians. Gutiérrez' friendship with Camilo Torres and his work with Ivan Illich played an important part in shaping the definitive work in the field.[8] Similarly, we find evidence of Che Guevara's political fury and Paulo Freire's method of consciencization throughout the literature. The latter's method for achieving literacy was the basis for the consciousness-raising model which has become axiomatic in Liberation theology.

These influences have to be seen in light of the rapidly changing political situation in which this theology was set. The effects of neocolonialism and imperialism in Chile, Brazil, Argentina and Uraguay forced Liberation theologians to abandon traditional reliance on preconceived categories and to move into new sources for doing theology.

Even the language gives away the change. We find 'engaging in the theological enterprise,' a linguistic set that reflects the separatism between theology and life experience, as well as the subtle way in which theology has been made a part of the entrepreneurial spirit of neocolonialism. 'Doing theology,' an expression that still grates on the ears of many classically trained theologians, more adequately reflects the unity of acting/reflecting which is a hallmark of Liberation theology.

The history of this theological expression now spans the decade between Medellín and Puebla, that is, the decade between the second meeting of the Latin American bishops and the third meeting. English language materials for the most part date after 1970 although the conference at Medellín was held in 1968 (and Puebla in 1979, postponed shortly because of the death of Pope John Paul I).

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Gustavo Gutiérrez is the principal spokesperson of Liberation theology. He presented preliminary ideas at Chimbote, Peru in July of 1968.[9] He pursued the idea at a meeting on theology and development sponsored by Sodepax in November of 1969, and probably had little sense that he was presenting a substantial challenge to the theological world. As mentioned above, his book A Theology of Liberation was published in Spanish in 1971 and eventually in English in 1973 thanks to the foresight of Orbis Publishing Company which has subsequently published most of the Liberation theology materials which are in English translation.[10]

Gutiérrez' message was clear:

> theology of liberation offers us not so much a new theme for reflection as a new way to do theology. Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is a liberating theology, a theology of the liberating transformation of the history of mankind (sic) and also therefore part of mankind (sic)--gathered into ecclesia--which openly confesses Christ.[11]

He goes on to say that it is a theology

> which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed.[12]

Finally, he writes:

> It is a theology which is open--in the protest against trampled human dignity, in the struggle against the plunder of the vast majority of people, in liberating love, and in the building of a new, just and fraternal (sic) society--to the gift of the Kingdom of God.[13]

I quote Gutiérrez at length because, unlike any feminist theologians among whom there is no one person whose name is synonymous with the field, his work is considered rudimentary even ten years later. He included the theoretical and historical background which underlies Liberation theology as well as an exposition of the Latin American

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situation out of which issues like poverty, violence, eschatology and theophany take on new meaning.

A look at the Medellín documents reveals that the bishops were influenced by the nascent work of Gutiérrez who later quoted the Medellín documents throughout his work. This mutual informing process of bishops and theologians is one reason why Liberation theology has gained credence so quickly, at least among liberal bishops. It is important to note that this mutual informing process was due to the shocking realization by the bishops that their continent was enmeshed in poverty due to the dependence it had developed on colonial powers. The move on the part of the Church away from capitalism and toward a commitment to the poor transformed the theological community as well as the hierarchy. Liberation praxis began. By contrast, it is difficult to find a statement by the North American bishops which has been significantly informed by the various liberation theologies here, especially Feminist theology.

The subsequent struggles at the third meeting of the Latin American bishops at Puebla revealed the inroads that Liberation theology has made in Latin America. With infighting among bishops over which emphasis was to hold sway in the final documents and intramural assistance by Liberation theologians to provide liberal bishops with written materials which would assure that their ideas would be included, we can conclude that Liberation theology was a strong source for the Church in the '80's.

We can see also that Liberation theology is destined to play a large part in the theology of the next decade in Latin America. The documents from Puebla contain direct references to the preferential option for the poor (paragraphs 1134-1165) and to Basic Christian

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Communities (paragraphs 617-657), both important elements of Liberation theology.[14] However, the events between the last two meetings of the bishops, especially the coup in Chile and the related economic unrest in other Latin American countries put additional pressure on the bishops to move away from their earlier (Medellín) commitment to the poor. There is clear condemnation of certain aspects of Liberation theology, especially those which involve a possibility of violence as a Christian response to unjust situations (paragraph 531) and the use of Marxist social teachings as a tool for analysis which the bishops could not separate from the whole Marxist corpus (paragraphs 544-545). Nevertheless, the influence of Liberation theology as more than a foil for conservatives was clear at Puebla and will undoubtedly continue to be an important facet in the indigenous church in Latin America.

Having mentioned some of the central themes as they were expressed at Puebla, let us continue our look at the literature which followed Gutiérrez' book in order to see the scope of the 'school.' This is most readily accomplished by mentioning the major works. It is important to note that most of the theologians whose work will be mentioned were at the outset of their careers relatively unschooled in the ways of the poor in their countries. They had studied abroad and lived, for the most part, the privileged life of clergy and/or professionals. This is not to discredit their work, nor to indicate that their work did not propel them to greater involvement. But it is to say that often it was an encounter with political forces, namely, imperialism and dictatorships, which forced them to take Latin American theology down a road to liberation since Western European and North American theological categories alone were inadequate to handle the

experiences which were informing them.

This political necessity which influenced thinking is what is referred to in the Liberation literature as context. The priority which Liberation theology places on a thorough understanding of and honest reaction to the context is the precondition for "the liberation of our people from a form of cultural captivity."[15]

The history of Latin America written from a liberation perspective was contributed by Enrique Dussel.[16] He calls it "liberation history" to indicate that his reading of the sources is informed by an awareness of the marginality of the Latin American experience in the mainstream of history. In such works which inform mainline theology, "Little or nothing is said about Latin America."[17] Yet these accounts parade as histories of the universal Church when in fact they are really histories of the Western European Church with some North American input toward the end. Consciousness-raising about this fact, and the impetus to change it for future readings comes "when we discover we are outside history."[18] Only then "can we ask ourselves who we really are."[19]

A second major issue in Dussel's work is the application of the above insight to Latin American Church history. He rereads the major stages of Church history in light of an awareness of current Latin American reality. He employs this lens to conclude that "Christendom--that vast cultural, religious, and socio-political reality of the past--is on its way out." He claims that this "is the reason behind all the crucial problems we Christians are now facing in Latin America."[20]

Dussel's reading of Latin American history was followed by his attempt to translate Liberation theology into the ethical sphere. A new lens for understanding history gave support to "a whole new approach

to theology, epistemologically because of the formulation of the question of dependence, spiritually because of the discovery of the countenance of today's poor."[21] The fusion of history and theology gave way to new ways of acting, new ways of choosing among alternatives. Specifically, Dussel applied the same suspicion he had about history and theology to ethics, since it was subject to the same ideological overtones.

The primary issue which focuses liberation ethics is the question of violence. The argument, according to Dussel and later Segundo, is that we now judge a situation on the basis not only of event but also on the basis of context. There is a difference between "the violence of the conquistador, repressive violence designed to nullify the authentic gesture of liberation" and "the liberating violence of the liberator."[22] This seemingly subjective difference is in the context.

On the one hand there is the tabula rasa approach in which violence can be easily discerned as a power play against the weak. On the other hand, there is an awareness of the socio-economic factors which make up situations, namely the context and a judgement made about what constitutes violence, or what factors condition the choice for violent means under such circumstances.[23]

Dussel's point is to show that liberation takes place when "historico-cultural" dimensions of Christianity are lived out in praxis. Praxis is the concrete work in the world which is decided upon and carried out in dialogue with faith reflection. Liberation theology from his point of view is

> strategic support for the liberation praxis of the Christian, since it clarifies on a radical level the

> concrete, historical, somewhat veiled options that Christian faith daily interprets.[24]

The strategic nature of Liberation theology cannot be overemphasized. It is not enough to say that praxis base and attention to context give it a priority or even form some kinship with Feminist theology. Rather, it is important to point out that the implicit claim of Liberation theology is that the struggling poor are the persons whose lives demand a Gospel response. The response is not simply a toleration of a variety of theologies or a number of socio-economic structures. It means beginning with the most oppressed, the materially poor, and joining in their concrete struggle for survival and creativity. In doing so we follow the mandate of Jesus (Phil. 2:5-8 and Luke 7:21-24).

The bishops made this clear in their pastoral guidelines:

> The required change in unjust social, political, and economic structures... The Gospel demand for poverty, understood as solidarity with the poor and as a rejection of the situation in which most people on this continent live...

are what it means "to proclaim Christ the savior."[25]

A closer look at Liberation Christology makes this clear. The two major expositions by Gustavo Gutiérrez and Jon Sobrino have both been criticized for making Jesus a tool for political action. Although the complete treatment of Liberation Christologies is the subject of a separate dissertation it is instructive to know just how these respective texts treat Christology as an introduction to the methodology of Liberation theology.

In Gutiérrez' work Jesus is found in the neighbor through charity. "Charity is God's love in us and does not exist outside our human capability to love and to build a just and brotherly (sic) world."[26]

The uniqueness of Christ is his union with all human beings, "especially the poor, marginated, and exploited ones."[27] Hence the love of neighbor is not meant to be privatized and individualized. After the fashion of Jesus who promised the kingdom (Matt. 5:10) the love of neighbor is socially transformative, "directed toward a radical change in the foundation of society."[28]

Gutiérrez takes another tack in his Christology when he describes the action of Jesus in his political situation. He claims that Jesus, while sympathetic toward and even in agreement with some of the Zealots' teachings,was always careful to distance himself lest his message be identified with any political program. His teaching of "spiritual freedom" toward the law contrasted with their literalism.[29] His liberation is "universal and integral,"transcending nations and races, attacking "the foundations of injustice and exploitation" in whatever forms they exist.[30]

As further proof that Jesus confronted systems Gutiérrez pointed out that he took on publicans (Matt. 9:10 ff.), Sudducees (Matt. 3:7), and the government itself in the person of Herod.[31] He notes that Jesus was killed by political authorities whose privilege and power were challenged by his teachings. In each instance the attention of Jesus was not directed to a specific person, but to a structure which prevented persons from living freely. Gutiérrez does not try to derive a political model from the life of Jesus. Rather, he tries to ferret out the elements of a Christian approach to social structures, especially unjust structures. Hence the criticisms which accuse him of reducing Jesus to a political tool for certain groups seem groundless.

The Christology of Leonard Boff (Jesus Christ Liberator) provides

a transition between Gutiérrez and Sobrino.[32] Boff contrasts liberation themes with traditional European approaches to Christology. His treatment is a useful compendium of such sources, but his own Christology appears to be derivative from or over against such approaches rather than a fresh attempt based on the Latin American reality.

It is not until the epilogue that Boff gets at the socio-political aspects of the situation itself which effect a Christology.[33] The epilogue may foreshadow a more detailed treatment of such points, but currently the work of Sobrino is the only expansion available. Boff's work has come under Vatican scrutiny lately. Given its fairly traditional sources and conclusions it is amazing to think what the official reaction will be to Sobrino's Christology in time.

Jon Sobrino's Christology at the Crossroads is a brilliant, systematic effort to confront the very difficult problem of Jesus understood in a revolutionary context. Sobrino attempts to articulate Christology which is based not in abstract theological categories, nor even in the asking of tough questions about the meaning of life after the Holocaust or in the face of revolution. It is a Christology "historically positioned and constructed from the Latin American situation of oppression, injustice and exploitation," rooted "in the historical Jesus and in the history of a people's pain and sorrow."[34] It is a Christology based on a suspicion of the prevailing academic models as well as of prevailing socio-economic structures. It is a Christology rooted in faith-informed praxis, arising from and illuminating the lives of the faithful.

Sobrino contends that this type of Christology offers a fundamental challenge to the whole of theology. By claiming that:

> Christology is possible only if the Father continues to be the ultimate horizon of reality, the Son continues to be the definitive example of how human beings can correspond to the Father, and life according to the Spirit of Jesus continues to be the authentic Christian way of acting..."

he claims that Liberation theology has shifted the basis issue from the content of theology to the precondition for doing theology.[35] By doing so there seems to be an implicit limit on all Christological statements to those who believe, i.e., to those who work on behalf of the poor.

Despite this shortcoming of which Sobrino is well aware, the prospect of a praxis based Christology is appealing because it forces the question of who Jesus is, even the question who Jesus is for us, to the question of who we are to and for each other because Jesus is Lord. Such a challenge while objected to by some scholars who prefer to keep Christology questions at arm's length, focuses the Gospel imperatives for rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed in ways that flow from the clarity of the Latin American situation.

The pastoral dimension of Liberation Christology and in fact of Liberation theology, is difficult to isolate from other aspects. The praxis base is synonymous with pastoral action. However, two important contributions need to be noted. First, the communal/experiential starting point is clear in the early work of Juan Luis Segundo. His series A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity is an example of orthopraxis.[36] The series is based not on academic categories, though it includes Church, Grace, God, Sacraments and Guilt, but on communal sharing and group reflection. The format is such that lectures are followed by study/discussion questions with the intention being that groups will contribute their life experience to the process. Segundo's later challenge to theological method is based largely on his experience

in these groups.

A second approach to pastoral action is found in the work of José Comblin. He insists that "the concrete element of missionary praxis will always be prior to the theology, and the latter must always take the former into account."[37] In Latin America the locus of such praxis is in Basic Christian Communities, small groups of people who gather for support, education and liturgy. These groups, which number in the thousands in many countries and which even the bishops at Puebla were obligated to acknowledge, are a new model of Church. The bishops noted that the Basic Christian Communities "embody the Church's preferential love for the common people..." and that in them people "are given a concrete opportunity to share in the task of the Church and to work committedly for the transformation of the world."[38]

The final aspect of Liberation theology which has had an impact on current theologizing is its approach to Scripture. Throughout the materials cited above we find various hermeneutical approaches to scriptural texts as well as to theological issues. José Miranda's book Marx and the Bible is but an initial inquiry in this direction.[39] The work of Beatriz Melano Couch on the "hermeneutics of suspicion" as applied in Latin American interpretation is all that we have available.[40]

Dr. Couch includes two suspicions, namely, suspicion about our own ideas and suspicion about our methods. While we await a fuller treatment from Dr. Counch in a forthcoming book, we can see from her summary that a hermeneutics of Liberation theology is both "a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of hope born of engagement."[41] This entails political commitment, or what others have termed a praxis base.

Juan Luis Segundo has spelled out the methodological implications of the various content issues in Liberation theology in his book Liberation of Theology.[42] Originally lectures given at Harvard Divinity School in 1974, Segundo's work contains the claim that Liberation theology is a whole new way of proceeding which will free traditional theology from its preconceived categories, limited sources, narrowly defined constituency and static results. Segundo employs his own hermeneutical circle to open up new theological possibilities. He relies heavily on social scientific materials, particularly on economics and sociology to provide a methodology capable of handling the whole. The key to his method is "systematic suspicion."[43] By this he means that we must suspect that theology, once the queen of the sciences, has been coopted by the elites for purposes of reinforcing their power. But at the same time we can rescue theology from this fate and turn it into a useful discipline by proceeding 'suspiciously.'

This insight applies to the political sphere. Segundo, like many liberation theologians, is critical of the ways that theology has been the manservant of the ruling class in order to reinforce unjust social structures. But in a parallel way he claims that theology has been at the service of the ecclesiastical and academic elite, circumscribing itself by virtue of esoteric language and rigorous attention to minutae while missing some of the pressing needs of the people.

Segundo offers a way into the theological process for the masses, beginning with a faith commitment. But he avoids the reductionism of a closed circle by subjecting even his faith presuppositions to the suspicion he uses to understand everything else. His system is not closed to unbelievers, but is open to their challenge. It seems to me

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to be a clever and sound way to handle a difficult problem.

Segundo's challenge is not simply to Latin Americans needing a conceptual framework for their lives. It is a challenge to the entire field of theology to look closely at its own presuppositions, to subject itself to a systematic 'suspicion' about modes and tools of analysis, and to overhaul itself so as to be liberative rather than simply talk about liberation.[44]

Segundo is serious about this challenge when he claims that looking at the epistemological aspects of Liberation theology (as Gustavo Gutiérrez looked at the content issues) will "challenge the mechanisms of oppression and the effects of the oppressor system to expropriate the terminology of liberation."[45] This dissertation is an effort to respond to Segundo's challenge, and lay down one of my own. It is an effort to say that even Segundo's method can be critiqued and corrected by other methods, for example Feminist theology. My aim is the same: to transform the discipline from theology to 'theopraxis,' from talk about God to action about God.

Before outlining the issues and method of Liberation theology and in order to bring the history up to date it is necessary to mention several of the North American efforts to respond to Latin American Liberation theology. The term which in its primary meaning is what we have referred to throughout this chapter also has a secondary meaning which in turn has two foci. The first focus is liberation theology as an umbrella term for the various indigenous or strategic theologies as mentioned earlier. This is a dubious usage because while many of these are attempts at articulating questions of meaning and value from situations of oppression, some are simply new content in old, academic categories.

This does not render them unimportant, but it does make the title 'liberation' improper. A better umbrella term might be 'indigenous' at least for the moment until theological method shifts.

The second focus for liberation theology in this secondary sense is the work that has been done in response to Latin American theology in the First World. This attempt to formulate theology adequately for the complexities of our time is the liberation task. I call this liberation theology (lower case 'l') because it is in direct continuity with Latin American efforts, having taken account of a very different starting point.

Marie Augusta Neal's work in the theology of relinquishment is a first step.[46] She proposes that the only response possible by First World people to the Latin American theology is that of giving up a portion of our power, whether monetary, ideological or spiritual. She writes:

> Gutiérrez has provided in the theology of liberation the beginning of one dimension of the dialectic for the new theology--the other being a theology of relinquishment for the advantaged.[47]

Seh does not provide a blueprint for carrying out such a theological program but she makes clear that it involves at least the dismantling of economic and cultural structures which result in Western hegemony.

Dorothee Soelle proposes instead a theology of resistance.[48] She begins with the Liberation theology "hermeneutical catchword" which she names "contextuality."[49] Assessing our context liberation does not seem appropriate, but acting over against the structures which make liberation necessary for the Third World can be our contribution to the process. Soelle states:

> Resistance is how human beings who are members of the white bourgeoisie--those who normally participate

> in oppression and profit from exploitation--participate in liberation struggles.[50]

One insight which flows from Soelle's concept is that the process of liberation-resistance can never be one-dimensional. Since persons are called to conversion of body, mind and spirit, "all liberation is multi-dimensional."[51] This is a direct response to critics who say that Liberation theology is a socio-economic project. While Soelle would never deny that this is an important element, she would argue, it seems to me, that adding "resist nce" is adding a personal and communal challenge to say 'No' to powers and principalities, to the concept of liberation. This underscores the multi-leveled process which is involved.

A third expression of liberation theology in this secondary though important sense that I have outlined is Robert McAfee Brown's Theology in a New Key.[52] Brown restates the liberation principles: starting point with the poor; the interlocuter is the nonperson; the social sciences are key to the process; analysis is built on the reality of conflict; the model of engagement is praxis and theology itself is always the secondary step after commitment.[53] Brown's exposition is a useful way to translate Latin American insights into North American concepts.

He too answers the basic charges against Liberation theology, specifically, its seeming one-sidedness as an effort to change socio-political realities. He states that:

> Full liberation, full freedom in Christ will involve not just escape from oppressive structures, not just acknowledging history as an arena of human responsibility, not just recognition that personal sins are forgiven, but a mix of all three.[54]

Other North American theologians have reflected on liberation theology in this culture. Daniel Berrigan sees it in the Catholic Worker

tradition where "the elements are human service, reverence for praxis, reverence for reflection, the dedication of one's life to the poor, the underclass, and resistance to organized violence."[55] He cites the threat of nuclear war and the growth of nuclear arsenals as the locus of liberation theology for us.

David Tracy sees it in a similar, albeit more abstract, way. He asserts that:

> The various forms of liberation theologies can be viewed as intensified negative disclosures of the limit-situation of systematic oppression and as positive disclosures of the limit-demand for justice.[56]

Tracy's statement reminds us that liberation theology in its many expressions is Christian revelation for both the oppressed and the oppressors.

Latin American theologians are in dialogue with their North American and European supporters. Hence we will begin to see the effects of these comments on their later work. In addition, Liberation theology is in dialogue with Feminist, Black and Hispanic theological perspectives in this country, through the Theology in the Americas Project as well as in general theological conversation. The obvious points, e.g. that Liberation theology in Latin America is written predominantly by white males with Church ties such that it fails to take account of the life of the individual qua individual, will begin to be corrected.

Substantive critique has come from Schubert Ogden, among others, who sees Latin American Liberation theology as a good beginning but an inadequate end. He claims that it is more "witness" than "ministry."[57] He argues that it deals with the "existential meaning of God for us without dealing at all adequately with the metaphysical being of God in himself (sic)."[58] He states that Liberation theology fails to

distinguish between forms of liberation, and that liberation theologians have "too restricted or provincial an understanding of the various forms of bondage" which enslave us all.[59]

While Ogden's challenges deserve refutation (not my intention) they seem to miss the basic insight of Liberation theology. That insight is the fact that it challenges the nature of theology, the way theology is carried out. To the extent that Liberation theology succeeds in its own task, after the fashion of Segundo, Ogden's challenges fall apart. For example, liberation theologians would agree with Ogden that their work is not faith seeking understanding, rather faith seeking to manifest itself in Christian action on behalf of the oppressed, read: witness. Or, they would argue that who God is in Godself is known only and always through our knowledge of God. Our knowledge of God is not exhaustive, but the clues we have about the reality of God are disclosed to us through the history of people whose faith makes sense of their struggle for justice, and vice versa.

The constructive angle of Ogden's critique lies in his suggestion that Liberation theology shows "signs of still being very much under the influence of a metaphysical understanding of God that has played a fateful role in Christian theology."[60] We await the new insight which will undoubtedly arise out of a process liberation perspective. But until then we can hope that such theologies will tread the thin line between materialism (or too much emphasis on the social structures) and spiritualism (or too much emphasis on consciousness-raising).[61]

Investigation of Liberation theology in what I have called its primary and secondary senses results in a number of common elements. These serve as a set of general principles from which we can proceed

deductively to name the issues which are central. This is distinct from the approach we took in Feminist theology where we proceeded inductively by clustering issues and then naming categories. This deductive method seems appropriate because of the reliance of most liberation theologians on a fairly uniform context of revolution which de facto gives structure and urgency to the process.

I isolate three common threads in Liberation theology, to which John Coleman has added a fourth.[62] The three are praxis base, use of the social sciences and priority of the struggling poor. These are of course interrelated in practice but can be isolated for analysis.

The first of these, the praxis base, is commonly agreed upon yet still in need of definition. It means that theology has left the library carrel and moved into the streets. It means an interaction between the Word of God and the action of human beings, a reflection on strategy and tactics from a Gospel perspective. Liberation praxis is the starting point for theologizing. It is also the final step, the new situation to which the hermeneutic circle returns.

Given a praxis base the theologians' task and self-understanding have shifted. The task is to be among the struggling poor rather than to be among the books and scholars or to be in the pulpit, though some of these modes will be required. The self-understanding has been switched from being an articulator or pronouncer of the Word of God to being a facilitator of the questions of ultimate meaning and value and a doer of the work of God.

The second common thread of Liberation theology is the impact of the social sciences for the doing of theology. From a liberation

perspective this is hard to overestimate. The impact is derived from two sources. First, the use of Marxist tools of analysis is widespread. This has raised profound questions for folks who consider the use of anything from the Marxist corpus to mean an implicit acceptance of the anti-religious aspects of classical Marxism. However, class analysis has proved to be an invaluable tool for carrying out a hermeneutics of suspicion.

Marxist analysis helps us to unmask the extent to which certain readings of Scripture and certain theological methods are biased in favor of the powerful. It helps us to see the relationship between the elites and the masses, and to take concrete steps to overcome such distances. In addition, the Marxist priority on history has helped us to appreciate the radical historicity of the Gospel.

The second source of this impact of the social sciences on the doing of theology is from psychology, sociology, economics and anthropology. With the aid of specialized studies in these fields as well as with the reminder that they provide that liberation is multi-dimensional we can counter what Segundo calls "the ideological infiltration of dogma."[63]

These are further components of a hermeneutics of suspicion which destroy the myth of value-free contexts yet provide tools with which to analyze and correct for biases. Even the social sciences fall under suspicion, including the questions which theology brings to them.

The use of the social sciences for the doing of theology seems almost matter of fact in the '80's. But it is important to note that heretofore theology, even in the early part of the century, had functioned as if it were without need of outside support.

The third common thread for Liberation theology is the priority

given to the struggling poor. Like praxis and the social sciences this commonality runs throughout the literature and the documents of CELAM. Poverty is worsening such that the small share which the poor have in social/political life is being eroded. As the bishops made clear at Puebla, the poor are made in the image of God such that God's image is "dimmed and even defiled" (par. 1142) when they are left to their own devices. This is why Jesus' mission was first directed toward the poor and why "evangelization of the poor is the supreme sign and proof of his mission" (Luke 7:21-23).[54]

John A. Coleman adds a fourth element to Liberation theology, namely, the criticism of the ways that the Latin American Church "has been used as an ideological legitimating agency for an unjust political and social order."[65] I agree with John that this has been an important point at times (e.g. the Brazilian bishops have made courageous statements and individuals like Helder Camara stand out in their leadership in this regard). However, the relationship between Liberation theology and the Church is a complex one. Assuming Coleman means the hierarchy, there are still a growing number of exceptions which would make his statement shakey.

I prefer to see this institutional question collapsed into the other three. The institution is valid insofar as it provides a setting for praxis. Social scientific analysis, especially from a Marxist perspective, turns up a long history of the Church as a cooperator and beneficiary of the oppression of the poor. Finally, the poor have in no way been represented in or by the institution. Hence this fourth point seems sufficiently included in or derived from the first three as to render it superfluous.

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With three common threads as a framework for Liberation theology we can move deductively to name the issues which are central. From praxis we find that theology takes a turn toward a new starting point. No longer is it begun in abstraction, rather, in reflected upon action. The socio-political structures which ground praxis have new theological meaning. Liberation means the success of orthopraxis in meeting basic physical needs as well as spiritual needs.

The social sciences reveal that context is key. They provide the parameters of a hermeneutics of suspicion with which the Scriptures are to be read. Ethical decisions are made with regard to the situation in dialogue with the traditional principles of love and justice. Unjust social structures and the dreams of new ones can be evaluated with the aid of social scientific materials. Finally, the conditions of oppression need to be changed as a pre-condition for the possibility of the reign of God.

The priority of the struggling poor means that God is on the side of the oppressed. It derives from Jesus' message which was given specifically to the poor. And it means that persons in need dictate the contours of praxis.

From this sketch of issues we can see that all of the categories which emerged from the clusters of feminist theological issues are operative here. Divinity is variously understood by liberation theologians but in no case is it missing from the analysis, as contrasted with the fact that some feminist scholars have worked with the possibility of atheism.[66] Humanity is an inclusive term with only the faintest hint of a different anthropology for women than for men. Humanity is understood on the basis of the needs of the poor; the wealthy are under the

judgement of the Gospel.

The world is the locus of God's action to the extent that the severest critique of Liberation theology has been made by those who consider it too immanent. But the world is understood as thoroughly as possible through the lens of the social sciences, especially Marxist class analysis, such that nature emerges as the companion and not the competitor of persons.

Theology, which will be detailed more below in my remarks about method, takes a major turn. It becomes a tool for action, adding the richness of Scripture and the wisdom of tradition to the efforts of a people struggling to survive and make sense of oppressive situations. Especially in Christian contexts where the Church has often been the only agent for liberation this kind of reflection becomes crucial.

Liberation, finally, is the most difficult to describe. There is a sense in which this-worldly connotations are perfectly adequate because the work that needs to be done to transform social structures is awesome. However, even this work can be advanced by appeal to a transcendent element, liberation from the throes of death, which is the message of Jesus. To connect the two by the imperative of praxis among the struggling poor gives new meaning to liberation which is both immanent and transcendent.

What method is at play here? Segundo's hermeneutic circle is a useful model which I will modify for purposes of stating a more general approach. As in the case of Feminist theology this general method has four moments:

1. Starting point in praxis, with priority given to the needs of the struggling poor.

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2. Critique of prevailing structures and ideologies using social scientific insights, especially Marxist class analysis to ascertain context.
3. Re-evaluation of Scripture and traditional sources on the basis of a hermeneutics of suspicion followed by application of these materials to praxis.
4. Renewed theological concepts lead to clarification of the new orthopraxis.

These four elements are interwoven in the doing of theology but can be isolated for this kind of analysis. An example will illustrate how the method works, though it is important to note that no single liberation theologian would own this method just as no single feminist theologian would own the method presented in chapter 2. The value of this discussion is mainly heuristic as a step toward formulating a method adequate to the needs of contemporary theology.

Let us examine a pastoral situation involving the eucharist as an illustration of the method in action.[67] A priest working with the struggling poor outside of Guatamala City spends most of his time helping people build simple homes (1). They realize that their wages are too low to provide proper housing and employment is too unstable to allow credit. But by working together in the evenings they can build shelters for each other. The priest celebrates the eucharist with the group periodically and has been invited to preside at the eucharist in the city for a group of landowners who are their employers.

Looking at the conditions of his people and evaluating the economic structure of which they are a part he realizes that the landowners have a direct influence on the daily livelihood of the people (2).

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He turns to Scripture and finds a variety of passages which involve just wages, repentance, leaving gifts at the altar until amends have been made, the necessity to right a sinful situation, taking care of the least among us, etc. He understands his priestly obligation to lead community in worship when there is reason or justification to celebrate (3). He sends word that he will be unable to preside at the eucharist in the city and returns to the work team to build another house (4).

This somewhat fanciful and simplified illustration shows the liberation method in action. Not all decisions are as easily made; never is the evidence determinative without a careful look at the other side. However, the general outline works for both pastoral and academic examples. In principle the process is dialectical. Only testing it in concrete situations will prove whether it is dialectical in practice.

Liberation theology method has its shortcomings, some of which will become evident in the comparison with Feminist theology method in chapter 5. For example, it tends to deal with people in groups or classes to the exclusion of people as individuals. This is for survival reasons when the individual's needs sometimes have to be subordinated to the greater good. What about the spiritual needs of the landowners in the above example.

Another limitation in Liberation theology method is that primarily situation-specific or strategic theology tends to preclude universal claims. A renewed understanding of universal needs to be formulated since Christianity has long claimed to be for all.

These limitations notwithstanding, Liberation theology method challenges the discipline of theology, although the full extent of the impact has not been felt in this first decade of its existence. At

least we can say that the hegemony of Western European theology has been brought to an end with no indication that liberation theologians are interested in turning the tables in their direction. At most we can say that all theology is partial, limited and contextual. No longer is there a theology capital 'T' which exists without a context, without a specific historical moment which names the reality of God.

The major methodological insight of Liberation theology does not imply "liberal non-judgmental relativity."[68] Rather, it is a strong critique of prevailing models, both in its ideological content and its false generic method (i.e., the presumption that predominantly white, male, European trained clerics can make universal statements about ultimate meaning and value). Praxis, the hermeneutics of suspicion offered by the social sciences, and the priority of the struggling poor combine to ground the method outlined above which is, according to liberation theologians, far more faithful to the Gospel base for Christian theologizing. Hence, given this claim, contemporary theology stands under the judgement of a new way of theologizing which does justice.

Additional reflections on Liberation theology and its method will emerge in chapter 5 when it is compared with Feminist theology. For now, we have defined and described Liberation theology in both its primary and secondary senses. We have sketched the history of the movement and outlined the common threads which run throughout. We have moved deductively from the commonalities to the diverse issues. Finally, we have described a general methodology which seems to be at play throughout the work. Having arrived at two such methodologies we turn our attention to the question of method in the constructive task of theology as a prelude to presenting a new method.

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## NOTES

## CHAPTER 3

[1]Rosino Gibellini, editor, Frontiers of Theology in Latin America (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), p. x.

[2]CELAM II, The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin American in Light of the Council. Bogata, Columbia: General Secretariat of CELAM, 1970.

[3]The original publication of A Theology of Liberation was Teologia de la liberacion, Perspectivas (Lima: CEP, 1971).

[4]Joseph Comblin, "What Sort of Service Might Theology Render?" in Frontiers of Theology in Latin America, Rosino Gibellini, editor, p. 58.

[5]Thomas L. Schubeck, "Liberation and Imagination: A New Theological Language in Response to the Marxist Critique of Religion." Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1975, unpublished doctoral dissertation, p. 19.

[6]Cf. Appendix I of Frontiers of Theology in Latin America, Rosino Gibellini, editor, pp. 305-318.

[7]Ibid., p. 321. Cf. Camilo Torres, Revolutionary Writings (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) and Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) and Che Guevara Speaks, edited by Goerge Lavan (New York: Merit Publishers, 1967).

[8]Notes that most of my sources, unless noted otherwise, are in English for two reasons. First, it is difficult to obtain original materials in Spanish and Portugese without travelling to the countries in which they are written. And second, for purposes of this dissertation my interest in Latin American Liberation theology is its impact on theological method in the United States for which English materials seem sufficient. Let me add my thanks to Philip Scharper and colleagues at Orbis Books whose facilities have made most of these materials available to English speaking scholars.

[9]Gibellini, Frontiers, p. 312.

[10]Cf. note 3. Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973).

[11]Gutiérrez, Liberation, p. 15.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, editors, Puebla and Beyond (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979) contains the Puebla Final Document. Paragraph numbers are from this edition.

[15]Communique from Pan American Conference of Third World Theologians, Achimota, Accra-Ghana, Dec. 17-23, 1977, p. 6.

[16]Enrique Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976).

[17]Ibid., p. 33.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 109.

[21]Enrique Dussel, Ethics and the Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978), p. 165.

[22]Ibid., p. 48.

[23]Cf. Juan Luis Segundo, Liberation of Theology (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), chapter 6 for a full treatment.

[24]Dussel, Ethics, p. 177.

[25]Puebla Final Document, paragraphs 1155, 1156 and 1153.

[26]Gutiérrez, Liberation, p. 199.

[27]Ibid., p. 201.

[28]Ibid., p. 202.

[29]Ibid., p. 228.

[30]Ibid., p. 229.

[31]Ibid., p. 228.

[32]Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ Liberator (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978).

[33]Boff, Liberator, pp. 264-265.

[34]Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978), Preface to the Spanish Edition, p. xii.

[35]Sobrino, Christology, Preface to the English Edition, pp. xxiv-xxv. Note the need for feminist input on exclusive God-language.

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[36]Juan Luis Segundo, A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity series (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973-74, (5 volumes)).

[37]Jose Comblin, The Meaning of Mission (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1977).

[38]Puebla Final Document, paragraph 643.

[39]Jose P. Miranda, Marx and the Bible (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1974).

[40]Beatriz Melano Couch, remarks in Theology in the Americas, edited by Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), pp. 304-308.

[41]Ibid., p. 306.

[42]Segundo, Liberation of Theology (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976).

[43]Segundo, Liberation of Theology, p. 231.

[44]Ibid., p. 9.

[45]Ibid., p. 5.

[46]Marie Augusta Neal, A Socio-Theology of Letting Go (New York: Paulist, 1977).

[47]Ibid., p. 71.

[48]Dorothee Soelle, "Resistence: Toward a First World Theology," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. 39, No. 12, July 23, 1979, pp. 178-182.

[49]Ibid., p. 178.

[50]Ibid., p. 178.

[51]Ibid., p. 179.

[52]Robert McAfee Brown, Theology in a New Key (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978).

[53]Ibid., p. 60.

[54]Ibid., p. 74.

[55]Daniel Berrigan, "Connecting the Altar to the Pentagon," Fellowship, Vol. 45, No. 11, November 1979, p. 9.

[56]David Tracy, "Christian Faith and Radical Equality," Theology Today, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, January 1978, p. 373.

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[57]Schubert Ogden, Faith and Freedom: Toward a Theology of Liberation (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

[58]Ibid., p. 34.

[59]Ibid., p. 37.

[60]Ibid., p. 71.

[61]Thomas Schubeck, "Liberation and Imagination," pp. 288-289.

[62]John A. Coleman, "American Catholicism and Strategic Social Theology," The Catholic Church: The United States Experience, edited by Irene Woodward (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 43-71.

[63]Segundo, Liberation of Theology, p. 40.

[64]Puebla Final Document, paragraph 1142.

[65]Coleman, "American Catholicism," p. 64.

[66]For example, Sheila Davaney taught a course on feminism and atheism at Harvard Divinity School, 1978.

[67]Note that a complete treatment of the eucharist from a Liberation theology perspective is not intended. Nor is the example meant to be factual.

[68]Rosemary Radford Ruether, private correspondence, June 6, 1979.

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# CHAPTER 4

## METHOD IN CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

> Let me beg them not be scandalized because I quote scripture, the ecumenical councils, papal encyclicals, other theologians so rarely and sparingly. I am writing not theology but method in theology. I am concerned not with the objects that theologians expound but with the operations that theologians perform.
>
> Bernard J. Lonergan
> Method in Theology, p. xii.

Feminist and Liberation theological methods can only be understood and evaluated in light of the broader question of method in constructive theology. This is not because either is a direct descendent of another method though there will be similarities. Nor is it because in and of themselves they do not exemplify possible ways of proceeding theologically which stand up to rigorous investigation. Rather, it is important to look at method in construction in general in order to ground the comparison of these two methods in the larger background of this activity.

In order to do so, I will first discuss method in general and constructive method in particular. Next I will look at Bernard Meland's work which suggests some parameters in the field. Then I will examine the work of Bernard J. Lonergan and Gordon D. Kaufman which seem to provide certain important factors for developing an adequate constructive method. Next I will mention David Tracy's revisionist model as another example of contemporary method. From each of these I will take the major points which will ground my comparison of Feminist and Liberation

theologies in chapter 5 as well as my proposal for Feminist Liberation theology in chapter 6. Finally, I will discuss dialectic as it functions in method. With this background I will move into the comparison in chapter 5.

What is method? The most succinct definition comes from Lonergan: "A method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results."[1] This does not mean that a method, if followed meticulously by anyone, will yield the desired product. Rather it is "a framework for collaborative creativity,"[2] which needs the specific input, the life experience of an agent to work properly.

A method is found or considered to be at play when a number of people develop similar work habits or ways of approaching a problem. The result of one application of the method is in turn applied to other problems such that both the body of content and the way of proceeding (the method) develop apace.

A number of methods have been used in the history of theology. A catalogue of these is beyond the scope of this project. But it is interesting to note that surprisingly little has been written over the years about the various methods used to arrive at radically new content in Christology, ecclesiology, etc. Typically new content is arrived at with only the most perfunctory remarks on method.

The contemporary theological expressions like Feminist, Liberation and other indigenous or strategic theologies offer not simply content change, but self-conscious shifts in the whole way of doing theology. Herein, it seems to me, lies their fundamental challenge

to the discipline. Their challenge is being taken seriously in theological circles because other methodologies are proving to be inadequate. This does not mean that they are gaining widespread acceptance (to the contrary, e.g., a noted Liberation theologian taught recently at a respected United States divinity school only to find himself among the pastoral or applied theologians rather than the systematic or foundational theologians). Nor does it mean that they contain the last word on theological method. But their existence and the seriousness with which they are being examined point to a paradigm shift in theology.[3]

Note that our concern in this chapter is more narrow than method. It is with <u>method in construction</u> or method in constructive theology. The term 'construction' is a relatively new one in a field which has distinguished foundation, fundamental, systematic, dogmatic, etc. theologies. All of these designations have histories which are also beyond the scope of this dissertation. But they cluster around the question of the proper material for the theological task and as such are close to the notion of construction.

Gordon D. Kaufman, for reasons which will be detailed shortly, writes that "the radically constructive character of the theological task has not been clearly recognized in the past."[4] Hence "there is little in the tradition to give us guidance on how to proceed methodologically."[5]

Given the paucity of material in the field I have chosen a few 'guides' along the way. Bernard Meland's work in constructive theology, albeit a process approach, contains some useful entrees into the concept. Lonergan's remarks on method in general help to illuminate some of the subtle points. Kaufman's model for constructive theology is the most

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clearly articulated model I could find. Finally, Tracy's revisionist approach contains noteworthy elements for looking at the tradition. Throughout the discussion my implicit assumption is that none of these alone is adequate although together they form the theo-historical context out of which contemporary theologies spring. I assume this because these models have the open-ended quality which will allow the new content of Feminist and Liberation theologies to emerge.

Bernard Meland, a Chicago process theologian, articulated presuppositions and included data in his empirical realism which are similar to the materials we have outlined in the two contemporary theologies. He asserted that "reflection upon method often follows most productively upon the engagement with an undertaking."[6] While this seems obvious, Meland is actually underlining how in a theology of culture as in any theological project the initial steps are tentative and halting; only with experience and the generation of new content do we have method upon which to reflect.

Meland's theology of culture begins not with a preconceived method but with the theologian's "self-understanding as a participant in a culturally conditioned faith."[7] As we will see this parallels Lonergan's work. But what is important at this point is to establish that theological method is useful only <u>after</u> contextual and individual biases have been acknowledged.

Meland defines constructive theology as "implying a focusing of theological interest upon immediate demands and concerns of living as these evoke and convey the realities of faith."[8] The faith starting point is critical because it is both personal and communal. The personal aspect is obvious enough but the communal aspect means that constructive

theology arises within a faith community such that the faith is in dialogue with the larger culture. Both Feminist and Liberation theologies are examples of this method.

Constructive theology is often characterized as a theology which "begins with an analysis of culture as a way of getting at the primal witness of faith."[9] Meland clearly rejects this as a primary definition although he acknowledges that it is one part of the process. Instead he proposes experience as the starting point for theological reflection and outlines a method which I have encapsulated as follows:

1. critical response to church, self and culture
2. evaluation of situation to discover parameters of meaning for faith statements
3. understanding faith statements within the Judeo-Christian mythos and cultural set
4. renewed look at Scripture
5. awareness of God to whom/which faith statements point.

The method, like Segundo's, is intentionally circular with the renewed understanding of God leading back to a critical response.

I am not concerned with the particular elements of Meland's method (e.g. the seeming limitation in point 3 of a Judeao-Christian mythos etc.). I am interested in the insistence that cultural analysis be part of the theological program. And I am interested in Meland's insistence that such a program be intentionally dialectical, an attempt "to attune our listening to the realities of faith beyond, yet intimately involving our structural existence."[11] Such a statement may seem obvious after looking at Feminist and Liberation theologies which are so concerned with the relationship of culture and religion. But if we realize

that theology heretofore did not make such axiomatic claims we can see the extent to which Meland laid the methodological groundwork for the theologies in question.

Perhaps in North America a cultural theology is the most we could have hoped for prior to the strategic theologies which are now emerging. However, Tillich's attempt at correlation which resulted in a theology of culture was more what David Tracy called juxtaposition of "situation" and "message" than an integrated method for taking the socio-cultural reality into account.[12] This critique notwithstanding, Tillich's work is an early effort to bring more than strictly theological sources to bear on questions of ultimate meaning and value.

Meland and Tillich paved the way methodologically for Feminist and Liberation theologians. Although neither of them emphasizes the rigorous use of the social sciences which we find in the contemporary theologies, they did make culture an indispensable component of their programs. Culture will also be an important element in the methodology which I will propose in chapter 6.

Bernard J. Lonergan's work on theological method offers a rich analysis of the various components which ground theology. In his monumental volume Insight Lonergan lays the epistemological foundation for theology.[13] He emphasizes the human subject as driven by the pure desire to know which includes the pure desire to know God, and results in religion and theology. He details the knowing process which involves experience, understanding, judging and deciding. Finally, he insists that it is not as important to know content as it is to be converted by knowing itself, that is by the process of knowing.

Conversion in Insight is essentially intellectual. But in

Method in Theology Lonergan defines conversion as "a transformation of the subject and his (sic) world" which is intellectual, moral and religious.[14] On each level conversion is marked by a change of direction, a new constellation of old facts, a new way of seeing. It is, on all three levels (intellectual, moral and religious) personal and communal. Eventually the communal becomes historical.

This emphasis on the life process of the theologian instead of on the abstract categories of the discipline involves

> a shift from theology conceived as a discipline to theology conceived as a process of cumulatively related operations which theologians perform...[15]

This shift depends on "conceiving the foundations of theology as the reality which is the converted theologian."[16] In our Feminist and Liberation theologies both rely heavily on this assumption. Awareness of a situation demands action on the part of the theologian. Action leads to awareness, so we can see the premium placed on experience and praxis in our examples is a direct outgrowth of this dimension in Lonergan.

Lonergan's focus on method does not result in a fetish about models, structures and frameworks. He relativizes these by understanding the case:

> It is simply an intelligible, interlocking set of terms and relations that it may be well to have about when it comes to describing reality or to forming hypotheses.[17]

This reminds us that method is always subordinate to the issues for which it is used as an analytic tool. Above all it is always the servant of faith which needs no model ultimately.

With these refinements in mind we can move on to Lonergan's transcendental method in which they will be obvious. By method Lonergan means "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding

cumulative and progressive results."[18] By transcendental method he means to emphasize that "the results envisaged are not confined categorically to some particular field or subject."[19] This process is intuitive, something that all of us develop to the extent that we are "attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible..."[20] However, the value of Lonergan's exposition for our purposes lies in the fact that he does not prescribe a method which rules in all cases. Inherent in his definition is the fact that the knowing subject will determine the structure of any approach according to itself and its situation.

For Lonergan there are eight elements which form a methodological constellation, if you will. These are the functional specialities of research, interpretation, history and dialectics; foundations, doctrine, systematics and communication.[21] Detailed discussion of these is not relevant to us. Lonergan notes that it is the task of the methodologist and not of the theologian to detail these.[21] But we need to mention that Lonergan sees these as interlocking and mutually informing elements. Communication, for example, is the element without which none of the others would be known. Likewise, foundations, the functional specialify which guides the selection of doctrine, is itself dependent on research, interpretation, history and dialectic for its material on conversion. What Lonergan is pointing to in his detailed explanation of these elements is that theology is a variegated process. But it is one which has 'method in its madness,' method which is appropriate to the needs of the knowing subject.

Lonergan does not go into detail about how such a process (not its content, but the process itself) or its individual elements is affected by various contents. This seeming lack deserves careful attention

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and may prove to be a flaw in his proposal. But in the interim we can use his general understanding of method to inform our own discussion with particular regard to conversion.

His method is useful for grounding our concern with the ways theology demands systematic change or structural conversion. But above all we can glean from him a starting point in the ever-changing experience of the theologian and her/his situation, as well as an appreciation for the fact that theology is an integrated process to the extent that the theologian is an integrated knower. Likewise theology is inclusive of the 'whole' of reality to the extent that the theologian allows it to permeate her/his consciousness.

Gordon D. Kaufman considers method to be a central problem for theology. Unlike Lonergan whose Thomism is everywhere apparent, Kaufman tries to develop a method which makes sense of his neo-Kantian presuppositions. While their results are quite different, their starting points in the experience of the subject (Kaufman's is modified) and their commitment to discerning the multiple levels of meaning, especially the symbolic and doctrinal, make them appropriate discussion partners.

Kaufman's method is not foreshadowed in his Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective.[22] As noted above about many similar theologians, Kaufman paid relatively little attention to the question of method in that work. Interestingly, in the second preface, written nine years after the original publication, Jaufman admits that "the beginning point and the general methodological orientation of this present work (Systematic Theology) are misconceived."[23] He makes his statement on the basis of An Essay on Theological Method and his growing concern for major world religions.[24] Hence we can conclude that the cogent articulation

of Christian faith presented in Systematic Theology and before the method piece it provides some of the content from which the method was developed. Kaufman is concerned with how much the word 'God' functions, coming out of the Death of God and linguistic philosophy traditions. He asserts that the word 'God' is attached to a concept which is both symbol and reality. In this collection he pulls together lectures and articles which focus attention on the difficulty of understanding 'God' when it is God who/which grounds belief.

He points to the contradiction inherent in the formulation of the God reality by stating in Kantian terms that there is a real God and an available God. Typically the available referent is but a pale imitation of the real referent as an Andy Worhol picture of a Campbell's soup can (available) is a poor substitute on a cold afternoon for the real thing. But in the case of God,

> the real referent can never be more than a limiting concept for us, a strong reminder that our ideas and experiences are far from adequate: for all practical purposes it is the available referent--a particular imaginative construct--that bears significantly on human life and thought.[25]

This theological understanding underlies Kaufman's remarks on method. If God is in fact an imaginative construct as described above then theology is not the art or science of expounding upon God. Rather, it is the constructive task of synthesizing data of sense experience with the traditional understandings, normative sources, etc. For Kaufman the theological task could not be other than construction since the focus is on the whole of reality.

How do we conceive of the whole of reality? According to Kaufman we begin theological reflection not with experience which is the last court of appeal but with "the central terms and concepts and

images provided by tradition and history."[26] These in collaboration with our experience provide us with the first moment of Kaufman's three step method, namely, the construction of a concept of world. We are able to construct this because theology is second order activity; theology is not the interpretation or worse, the reporting of the word of God given in revelation. It is essentially the second order activity of constructing a meaningful structure out of the data of human experience in a specific tradition.

The second step in the process of conceiving the whole of reality or theologizing involves limiting and relativizing the concept of world with the concept of God. Note here that we call this process theologizing because, according to Kaufman, the roots of such activity are in ordinary language. But given the special character (real/available relationship) of the word 'God' we can call that which pays special attention to 'God' theology. The word 'God' "unites the relativizing and the humanizing motifs and holds them together in one concept."[27] This is a unique function, one which makes theologizing a necessary process for the discernment of human meaning. It is important even for those whose work is similar in form but different insofar as they leave aside the content of belief.

The third moment in this interconnected method involves grasping the world and human experience in light of the concept of God. This means that the process is circular such that the moments are not serial but integral. This is because

> the complexity of theological work requires all three moments of construction in mind at all times, so that their dialectical interplay and interdependence can be fully realized and each will be granted its proper integrity.[28]

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The contrast between this method and the more static one which Kaufman relied on in his earlier work is clear. He seems to be moving in the direction of the theologies we have investigated when he calls for theology to be a third order activity. By this he means all theology is constructive and that all theologians need to be deliberate about the criteria we employ since persons and structures are affected by the symbols we choose to develop. For Kaufman the impetus for doing theology comes from the overwhelming, unavoidable experience of God in the world. This is sufficiently powerful to demand exploration into the variety of religious expressions which people have formulated to respond to their experience of God. Feminist and Liberation theologies are good examples of this.

Kaufman emphasizes that it is not construction that is new in theology but the awareness of the fact that theology is a constructive task that is new. In every era "theologians have undertaken to construct and reconstruct the ideas of the world and God in such a way as to make them intelligible in their time."[29] This is how the faith stays alive and becomes meaningful in ever changing circumstances.

The fact that all theology is constructive need not be a deterrent to traditional faith. Nor should it be taken to mean that it is an empty, vacuous, cognitive enterprise which will admit any answers we would choose to give. It is of the nature of theology that it be imaginative since there is no other way to conceive of the universal, the whole, the Other.

Kaufman's method is attractive. It is sufficiently abstract to allow for a variety of input and sufficiently concrete to focus the theological task in specific situations. Kaufman's frank admission

that constructive theology is a frightening challenge, coupled with his genuine desire for strategic/indigenous theologies to move beyond critique to construction are both indicators of his openness to what has followed, especially Feminist and Liberation theologies. Conversely, the framework or meta-method which his three interlocking points of analysis provide as a background for the many strategic theologies is valuable.

Nevertheless there are shortcomings in his approach. If one does not accept the real/available split, or if one sees the world not as construction but concretion, and if one sees Ultimacy as available in and through the everyday relational interchange, then Kaufman's method loses some of its appeal. Or, if one handles experience as starting point in Lonergan's sense and not as final court of appeal as Kaufman would have it, then one is left with fundamental disagreements with Kaufman. Finally, if praxis and/or the experience of oppression is one's way into the theological realm, i.e., if one is trying to make sense not of ultimate abstractions like God and world but of proximate concretions like the next meal or lack of it, then Kaufman's method seems more like second than third order reflection as he defines it. These shortcomings are not meant to detract from the value of his insights. But they are meant to indicate why his method has not been appropriated more widely.

The useful aspect of Kaufman for our purposes is his insistence that it is the reality and experience of God which ground theology. This along with his methodological precision have influenced my own work on method.

A final guide in this relatively new field of construction is

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David Tracy. Tracy's indebtedness to Lonergan is obvious throughout Blessed Rage for Order since they share many of the same epistemological presuppositions.[30] However, in proposing his own method Tracy takes account of a pluralistic context and a variety of starting points.

He outlines five disclosure models in theology: Orthodox, Liberal, Neo-orthodox, Radical and Revisionist.[31] By disclosing God, humanity and the world "with varying degrees of adequacy" these five models provide us with the range of methodological attempts in the last two centuries.

The Orthodox model deals with Christian beliefs without regard for the contingencies of modernity. This results in a rigorously systematic approach but a dearth of "inner theological" work with reference to sources outside of Scripture and tradition.[32]

The Liberal model is based on efforts to rethink the entire Christian program in terms of modernity, in contrast with the Orthodox model which eschews such elements. It lets the new historical, philosophical and social scientific discoveries challenge and eventually harmonize with Christian belief. Even Tracy admits that this model, while important as a first step toward opening up the discipline to new data,still yielded dubious conclusions.

Neo-orthodox theology is seen as a direct descendent of Liberalism. It combined a critique of Liberalism's inability to deal with evil and a stress on grace as the expression of "faith in God's manifestation of self in the event of Jesus Christ."[33] Canons of adequacy and appropriateness were employed and the importance of hermeneutics was stressed.

Radical theology depends on the rejection of the various concepts

of God in Orthodoxy, Liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy in favor of a human being liberated from such dependence. In some Radical theologies Jesus is still important, even normative for authentic human life. This approach, according to Tracy, asks the right questions but misses the central theme of Christianity which is based on the God-human relationship. To do theology with one essential ingredient missing (i.e., God) seems to me to be a contradiction in terms.

The final disclosure model is Revisionism which Tracy considers to be adequate to the task of contemporary theology. It is the one which he chooses for the central Christian task, namely,

> the dramatic confrontation, the mutual illuminations and corrections, the possible basic reconciliation between the principle values, cognitive claims, and existential faiths of both a reinterpreted post-modern consciousness and a reinterpreted Christianity.[34]

Tracy goes on to propose such a model which is based in Christian texts and common human experience and language in critical correlation.

The texts are interpreted and articulated through history and hermeneutics. The experience and language are interpreted and articulated through the religious dimension of everyday talk.[35] Finally, the results are correlated in order to assess their similarities and differences and to assess their truth value.

For our purposes a thorough analysis of Tracy's proposal is unnecessary. It is sufficient to note that he like Meland, Lonergan and Kaufman contributes a model which is useful for doing academic theology but which may not be very useful for pastoral application. It is the latter application which is so crucial for Feminist and Liberation theologies that it is in fact their starting point. He does provide an emphasis on and a way to deal with tradition which will be

useful in the model I will propose.

Tracy promises a systematic theology constructed on the basis of this model, a revisionist systematic for the '80's.[36] We await this before judging the adequacy of the method. Yet he questions whether praxis (the critical relationship between theory and practice whereby each is dialectically influenced and transformed by the other)[37] without "critical social theory"[38] can be valid. By this he means that the various theological expressions which rely heavily on praxis for their starting point and/or content miss the theoretical subtleties which are necessary to develop symbols.

Tracy's revisionist model cannot be applied en toto to other situations. But the concern with tradition in the formation of liberating symbols, symbols which will stand over against prevailing culture in judgement of its inadequacies, is vital to a renewed theological method. Tracy's approach can be rigorously intellectual since it is based on ideology and imagination rather than necessity and concretion. However, this does not diminish its value as a way of testing certain elements in a more broadly based theology. For example, if I were interested in how tradition fit into a contemporary analysis I could flesh out the Christian Scripture-common human experience/language dialectic. But I would still need to add other elements such as praxis to consider the results theology according to Feminist and Liberation models.

The foregoing authors have shown us the nature of method and the importance of construction in theology. We can conclude that the importance of method in construction is the mandate it provides for the theologian "to discern and formulate explicit criteria and procedures

for theological construction."[39] This is what I take to be the task of theologies and specifically the task of Feminist and Liberation expressions as they develop methodologies.

Thus far we have isolated four methodologies and gleaned the major contribution from each. In Meland's work we find a stress on culture; in Lonergan an emphasis on the experience of the theologian. In Kaufman we are struck by the determinative nature of God in the theological process; in Tracy the ultimate return to the tradition and its sources. These elements when taken together seem to be an adequate starting point for theological method. But we need to preface our explanation of such a method with a word about dialectic since this is the most appropriate way to ground their relationship.

Dialectic may be understood in the following two ways. Dialectic after the fashion of Hegel results when diverse elements of an analysis interact such that the product of their interaction is something quite new and surely more than the sum of the parts. But in Gadamer we find this refined as a way to overcome "the tendency of method to prestructure the individual's way of seeing."[40] Gadamer corrects for what he considers to be the inability of any method to reveal fresh truth. He claims that method "only renders explicit the kind of truth already implicit in method."[41]

In this process Gadamer does not move with Hegel to radical subjectivity or what we might find bordering on solipsism in theology. Rather, he moves phenomenologically with Heidegger "to have the being or thing encountered reveal itself."[42] This means that in theology the nature of God, world and humanity, and their interrelationship will be revealed in a dialectical process just as the method itself was

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revealed dialectically.

Dialectic in this sense is almost an antidote to method. If method structures content according to a preconceived form then dialectic allows the material itself to pose the categories. Here Lonergan's emphasis on the subject is key. The questioner "suddenly finds himself (sic) the being who is interrogated by the 'subject matter' (Sache)."[43] This forces a conversion experience for the subject, in our case for the theologian.

While we have seen how dialectic works in this Heideggerian model we cannot forget that it also functions in the Hegelian sense. Hence we can say that the elements of our method are related dialectically in both senses. One way to signify this is to call our method one of dialectical conversion as opposed to dialectic in either of the single senses. This means that not only is the theologian converted but because of her/his conversion there is a change in the way in which structures and concepts are understood, and indeed a change in structures and concepts.

A method of dialectical conversion which includes the four elements above (culture, experience, mystery and tradition) would allow for a dynamic interplay among the elements. It is the foundation of an activist hermeneutic adequate to the needs of our time. It calls for the self-conscious participation of the theologian in the process. Other aspects of it will be explored in chapter 6 but for now it is sufficiently intriguing to demand further exploration of the sources.

Throughout this study I have relied on Feminist and Liberation theologies for my exploration of theological method. I chose these two (as opposed to Black, Hispanic, etc. theologies) because they seem to be offering the most profound critique of the discipline. Feminist

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theology has raised the question of faith: How can a woman or man be considered a feminist and also a Christian? Put theologically, is the death and resurrection of Jesus and the community and tradition which has grown up around that event inherently patriarchal such that Christian faith is impossible for women and feminist men? The answer is a methodological one. How can we handle the Christian theological tradition such that an affirmative answer for the above question will lead to new creative religiosity and a negative answer will lead to a renewed Christianity?

Liberation theology has raised the question of context: Is there something unique about the way the God-human-world relationship is lived out in a revolutionary situation which Christian theology needs to internalize? Put theologically, is the death and resurrection of Jesus and the community and tradition which has grown up around that event given new meaning in a context in which people are struggling for their lives? Again the answer is a methodological question: How can we proceed theologically in such a context and what does that new way of doing theology mean for the whole discipline?

These two theological expressions were chosen because together they push the deeper question of <u>universality</u>. In a tradition which has made varying claims about universality (some embarrassingly imperialistic but others authentically inclusive) the challenge to faith and the challenge of context occasion the paradigm shift which makes room for a new method. Taken seriously these two elements cannot help but push theologians to an examination of the distant reaches of the discipline, beginning with what constitutes a universal claim? No longer does male experience have <u>de facto</u> universal claims on what it

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means to be human. No longer does a Western context have a corner on what the whole of reality is about. Such analysis suggests that universality will be redefined to mean the greatest possible number of particular points of view. This will be the subject of our speculation in chapter 6.

These remarks on theological method in constructive theology, on the notion of dialectic, and finally on Feminist and Liberation theologies as they challenge the whole process of doing theology serve as a backdrop for the methodological comparison in chapter 5. We will look at Feminist and Liberation methodologies as developed in chapters 2 and 3 respectively. We will attempt to understand their unique elements, their relative strengths and weaknesses. Then we will suggest that a fusion of the two leads us to, though does not exhaust, a new methodology which I will call Feminist Liberation theology.

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## NOTES

### CHAPTER 4

[1]Bernard J. Lonergan, Method in Theology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

[2]Ibid., p. xi.

[3]'Paradigm shift' was popularized by Thomas S. Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[4]Gordon D. Kaufman, An Essay on Theological Method (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975), p. 33.

[5]Ibid., p. 33.

[6]Bernard E. Meland, Fallible Forms and Symbols (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. XV.

[7]Ibid., p. 122.

[8]Ibid., p. XIV.

[9]Ibid., p. 121.

[10]Ibid., pp. 148-149.

[11]Ibid., p. 148.

[12]David Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 46. Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, edited by Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

[13]Bernard J. Lonergan, Insight (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970) (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1957).

[14]Lonergan, Method, p. 130.

[15]William E. Reiser, review of Method in Theology by Bernard Lonergan in Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. 28, Winter 1973, pp. 186-189.

[16]Ibid., p. 187.

[17]Lonergan, Method, p. XII.

[18]Ibid., pp. 13-14.



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[19]Ibid., p. 14.

[20]Ibid., p. 14.

[21]Ibid., p. 355.

[22]Gordon D. Kaufman, Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968).

[23]Gordon D. Kaufman, Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978).

[24]Gordon D. Kaufman, God the Problem (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[25]Kaufman, God the Problem, p. 85.

[26]Kaufman, An Essay on Theological Method, p. 8.

[27]Ibid., p. 59.

[28]Ibid., p. 61.

[29]Ibid., p. 59.

[30]Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order.

[31]Ibid., p. 22.

[32]Ibid., p. 25.

[33]Ibid., p. 28.

[34]Ibid., p. 32.

[35]Ibid., chapter 3.

[36]Ibid., p. 238.

[37]Ibid., p. 243.

[38]Ibid., p. 246.

[39]Kaufman, An Essay on Theological Method, p. 35.

[40]Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 165.

[41]Ibid., p. 65.

[42]Ibid., p. 166.

[43]Ibid., p. 165.

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## CHAPTER 5

## METHODS COMPARED: FEMINIST AND LIBERATION THEOLOGIES

> Woman is a central theme in the Theology of Liberation in the manner in which it is in the bible and in the process of liberation that it is alive in Latin America. The point of meeting with the theme is therefore the concrete practice of women in the collective plan of liberation.
>
> Carmen Laura De Amesz
> "The Theology of Liberation and Women"

The methods of Feminist theology and Liberation theology arise out of distinct contexts and contents. Each serves as a framework for detailed analysis and sustained praxis. But each it seems to me has its own limits when applied outside of its own situation. The most obvious lack in Feminist theology is the strong point of Liberation theology and vice versa. It is almost trite to say that Feminist theology has been largely the work of white Western bourgeois women and that Latin American Liberation theology passes over the needs of women. Specifically, Feminist theology needs a class analysis and Liberation theology needs an analysis of sexism. While this is true and important it does not approach the deeper similarities and differences which underlie the methodologies.

In this chapter I will compare Feminist and Liberation theologies in terms of some general categories which reveal their outlines. In neither case will I be dealing with a closed or finished system. I will look at their starting points, use of sources, relationship to the institutional Church and the role of the theologian in each. This

comparison will generate parameters around each method before I spell out their methodological similarities and highlight their differences. Along the way I will suggest canons of adequacy appropriate to a renewed theological method before proposing one in chapter 6 and testing it in chapter 7.

Two preliminary notes seem appropriate before plunging into the comparison. First, while this is primarily a comparison of methods the initial remarks will be focused on content. This is unavoidable and appropriate. It is unavoidable because no method is understandable apart from content with which it interacts. It is appropriate because it is through specific content issues that we see method at work in clearest relief. For instance, if a feminist theologian draws on literature and music as resources for theology in order to show how Goddess imagery functions as sources for talk about divinity then she/he is demonstrating the third methodological point in Feminist theology, the recasting of customary sources under a hermeneutics of suspicion and with the light shed by data from the social sciences, literature, etc.

Second, it would be helpful for purposes of comparison to have examples of these two methodologies interacting. Such instances are few and far between and the few we find are generally undocumented. A notable exception is the "Mujeres para el Dialogo" sessions which were organized by Elizabeth Hollants in Cuernavaca, Mexico.[1] These discussion sessions were held at the time of the Latin American bishops' meetings in Puebla, Mexico in January 1979. They were held away from the 'main' proceedings and had only marginal impact on CELAM III. However, the gathering of Latin American and North American women was an occasion for solidarity and challenge.

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The question of method was not addressed directly according to the resulting documentation. However, it is clear from press reports, discussion with participants and papers delivered at the meetings that here for perhaps the first time persons influenced by both Feminist and Liberation theologies were meeting with common agenda.[2] The mutual stimulation enriched both sides and resulted in a kind of theologizing which is qualitatively different from either one. This is the kind of theologizing that we will be concerned with in chapter 6.

Comparison of Feminist and Liberation theologies can take a variety of forms. General categories as mentioned above provide one way into the material. But it is important to note that the comparison is based on general trends in each so that direct application to any particular theologian's work will usually result in some distortion. This is similar to what happened in chapters 2 and 3 when I did not appropriate any specific Feminist or Liberation method but synthesized various elements from a number of these. The advantage of this way of proceeding is that it is a way to compare trends and not idiosyncratic elements.

Feminist theology begins in personal experience of oppression which is shared in a support community. Typically the strategy which emerges is aimed at the individual as she/he copes with structures. Liberation theology on the other hand begins in praxis which is carried out within and usually by a community. The personal dimension is rarely mentioned apart from the communal. These starting points each include both personal and communal dimensions but in nearly opposite configurations.

Feminist theology lists among its sources Scripture and the

theological tradition. It is usually critical of both from the point of view of women's longterm exclusion from or distortion in the Bible and the reporting of women's role. Therefore such materials are not used without a benefit of critical refocusing. Feminist theology includes literature, music, art, journals, oral history and even dreams as proper data for theologizing. But the primary new source is feminist theory, as mentioned in chapter 2, including the work of Susan Griffin and Charlotte Bunch.[3]

Liberation theologians, on the other hand, understand their praxis on the basis of Scripture which they have interpreted through a hermeneutics of suspicion, and tradition which they have reread through the lens of the oppressed. They do not include literature, art, music, etc. which feminists rely upon. But they tend toward liberal use of the social sciences, particularly Marxist class analysis. This results in a priority placed on economics and socio-cultural context for all theological thinking.

This comparison of the use of sources is striking for at least two reasons. First, it is clear that Feminist theology has broadened the variety of sources which are considered appropriate and necessary. Liberation theology has deepened ways in which traditional sources can be understood. Second, it seems that the general critical approach toward all sources sharpens the discipline. There is a complementarity here as the critical use of sources extends to the newly chosen feminist materials as well as to the traditional sources so that such materials will not be accepted uncritically just because they are 'politically correct.' Likewise, the liberation critique must extend to the sexism inherent in its own sources. With these two points in mind we can see

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that both Feminist and Liberation theologies inform one another with regard to sources.

Their respective relations to the institutional Church give us another key to their methods. Feminists range from evangelical to Gynergetic. It is almost impossible to determine a norm but I will risk saying that most Christian feminists are skeptical of the institutional Church in its various forms, though many continue to cherish the values and the community which it provides. Feminists as a whole are deeply pained by the marginality of women and our exclusion from decision making, adding up to the scandal of the limits placed on our ministry.

Another way to focus the issue of relationship to the institutional Church is through the writings of feminist theologians. Here the picture is undoubtedly more discouraging since few churches have taken this work seriously enough to generate any creative discussion.[4] Signs of backlash are apparent including rumors that the Vatica may soon rescind the right of women to function as lectors when there are men who can read in the vicinity! In short, because women have relatively little stake in the institution there is little investment in developing a theology which is geared in that direction.

The relationship of Liberation theology to the institutional Church is no less varied, though for quite different reasons. Many liberation theologians are clergy and/or church functionaries. They can be said to <u>be</u> Church in a traditional sense in terms of institutional power. Hence Liberation theology because it is formulated by persons who have a place in the structures of the institution has found its way into the bishops' discussions (e.g. Puebla) and has had some impact

on church policy. If we understand the church as the People of God we can say too that Liberation theology has had an impact. It develops from and returns to the grassroots according to its methodology.

There are of course liberation and conservative elements in the Latin American churches. But by the mid '80's we can expect that these forces will have had more substantial clashes than they had at Puebla. It is hard to predict how much Liberation theology will become part of the official church teachings since documents from Medellin and Puebla have been implemented slowly, if at all. There are indications of backlash here too with recent Vatican questioning of Leonardo Boff with regard to Jesus Christ Liberator.[5] Difficult problems with the magisterium are surely ahead. But the fact that in many instances the Church is one of the few, if not the only, institution which can stand over against the government makes it even more important that liberation theologians maintain some Church ties.

From their respective positions vis-a-vis the institutional Church we can conclude that Feminist and Liberation theologies function quite differently, though both push the horizons of the discipline. There is little suggestion that the institution has felt the feminist theological input, though it has felt the feminist political input. Obviously the two are related but we can see progress in ordination in many denominations in ways that we cannot point to it in a substantial change in Christian doctrine on God/Goddess, sin, etc. The mandate for women to make creative use of our marginality is still relevant.

Liberation theologians, because of their structural links to the Church, will have to labor to avoid cooptation in their efforts to

stay connected with the grassroots. This is the opposite of the feminists' problem. This seeming complementarity means that Feminist and Liberation theologians have the potential for cross-fertilization with each other as well as for enriched content to share with other disciplines. For example, injecting a feminist analysis into Liberation theology would move the institutional Church closer to equality. Or, pushing feminist theologians to understand the importance of the Church as a locus of some of their constituency (as well as a source for traditional materials on women) would be useful for building community over time, age, race, class, etc.

Feminist and Liberation theologies have fairly similar positions on the role of the theologian. While neither has solved the institutional problem of having their work recognized in the theological mainstream both are beginning to be accepted into the theological curriculum. Because of this there is room for creativity in roles for such theologians. The feminist theologian is seen as a facilitator of questions of ultimate meaning and value in her/his community. She/he may also be a chronicler of that community's history. But above all she/he is expected to take an active part in the socio-political and religio-cultural aspects of life. She/he is expected to be among the people, retreating to the library only to perform her/his unique but important task of communicating what she/he has experienced in the midst of the community. Sheila Collins is an example of this new model of theologian. In her book A Different Heaven and Earth she uses the fruits of her work for social justice.[6] Similarly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Beverly Harrison, etc. write from their experiences as Christian feminists involved with issues of race, class, sex and imperialism.

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Liberation theologians are equally connected to grassroots efforts. Some of them are political refugees from their countries because of their political involvement. The clerical structures in which many find themselves afford rich pastoral experience. They, unlike feminist theologians, tend to provide categories for renewed Christian faith, rather than simply facilitate the questions and let the categories emerge, as is the feminist tendency. Liberation theologians are leaders in situations where followers are expected to take over leadership positions. This means that theologians must invite input and welcome challenge. In any case, their theology is informed by faith lived in the midst of oppression. The urgency about their task is caused by the need to make immediate decisions in political situations which are getting increasingly hostile, e.g. El Salvador.

From this look at the roles of the theologians we can see that there are a variety of ways to restructure the traditional role. But we must add that restructuring the role of the theologians is making a virtue out of necessity since the theological ranks do not seem very open to such folks. When the mainline of the discipline reacts against new thought the creative response seems to be to provide an alternative. Perhaps this is another way of saying that the paradigm is shifting throughout the discipline. Those who have little stake in the ongoingness of the present paradigm have the luxury, indeed the responsibility, to move in new directions which will add dynamism to the entire effort to enhance the God-human-world relationship which I take to be the task of theology.

We begin to sense a number of common though not identical themes in Feminist and Liberation theologies. Sketching out a few more of

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these will help us to move in for a close look at the differences. A look at their respective methods will provide a focus for this effort.

Both Feminist and Liberation theologies have methods which are essentially pluralistic. They allow for and encourage a variety of starting points (i.e., a range of experiences and a number of different praxis possibilities). Pluralism reaches beyond denominational lines. It involves understanding theology as second level activity such that the many first level expressions of commitment can be embraced. This includes such seemingly diverse poles as Church Women United and proponents of Wicca, Marxist Christians and evangelicals. It also includes seeing theology as a discipline which is sufficiently sophisticated in and of itself so as to be useful for other disciplines. For example, the cross fertilization between Feminist theology and Feminist theory indicates that theology, at least in this form, is considered to be sufficiently differentiated (and not parochial) to be useful in secular work.

Both Feminist and Liberation theological methods are ecumenical with no specific denominational ties. The Roman Catholic background and training of many leading feminist theologians (e.g. Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether) and the Roman Catholic roots of many liberation theologians (Enrique Dussel, Gustavo Gutierrez and Juan Luis Segundo) reflect a decidely post-Vatican II Catholicism. This is a Catholicism which is ecumenical by design although it retains the traditional emphsis on clarity, thoroughness and rigor. It is interesting to note that confessional lines are almost a thing of the past in both of these theologies.

Both Feminist and Liberation methodologies are radically

eschatological in the sense explored earlier. They use faith claims to stand in prophetic judgement before an unjust world. They claim that Christianity has been expressed inadequately when it tolerates sexism and perpetuates poverty, or does not speak out loudly against such injustices. They point to a future which will be free of such scandals and argue that the process of moving toward such a future is directed by the life of Jesus and guided by the presence of the Spirit.

Eschatology in these two methods can be understood in terms of power. Who has the power to shape the future? And how do we change structures so that such power can be more equitably distributed? These are important underlying themes with both groups; their methods are designed to answer these questions. Eschatology takes on a power connotation because the changes in this world which will point to a new creation will be changes in the economy of power.

Both methods are rigorously historical. But they subject history to their own canons of interpretation, which we have called a hermeneutics of suspicion. Users of these methods realize that women and the poor have been denied their own histories. They realize that such groups have made and continue to make substantial contribution to the body of Church history. In making such contributions they need to be rooted in a revised self-understanding. The power dynamics which make history the tales that the victors tell about the vanquished need to be exposed and reestablished.

Both Feminist and Liberation theologies rely on the lessons of history as indicators of their own validity. Changes in the discipline and in the Church are part of that history. Locating themselves within that history helps to keep perspective on the fact that even these

movements which are shaping contemporary reality are simply expressions in our time of the prophecy, resistence, reconciliation, and celebration which are characteristic of Christianity.

Finally, both Feminist and Liberation methodologies are firmly rooted in the pastoral dimension of Christianity. They are circular so that both starting points and conclusions which are the new starting points are in praxis or pastoral work. For Feminist theology the pastoral component begins in awakening in women the structural connection between seemingly personal quirks about wanting to be full, whole and respected people in the Church and world, and 'the way things are' which prevents women from being truly human. The result of feminist theologizing is a body of shared material which will help entire communities to reflect the fullness of the presence of God in persons and structures.

Likewise Liberation theology begins in praxis, that is, in the reflected upon work which needs to be done along with the struggling poor. The theological reflection which follows helps to shape that reality by transforming Church and government structures into humane institutions. This is the ideal of course but the fact that liberation theologians take this as their task, rather than seeing their work as articulating an academically learned position on matters of doctrine, gives Liberation theology a unique place in the history of theology and in its future.

These five attributes, pluralistic, ecumenical, eschatological, historical and pastoral were referred to in chapter 1 as the attributes of an adequate theology for the '80's. While I have points out the extent to which both Feminist and Liberation theologies possess these, it could be concluded that each is an adequate method. I would not

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dispute this conclusion. And I hope that both methods will flourish because they have contributed significantly to the contemporary theological scene. In fact, I will mention a few other similarities which substantiate this claim about their adequacy.

However the ways in which they are dissimilar point up the weaknesses in each. Put another way, their dissimilarities reflect their growing edges. These are edges which I hope to fuse in Feminist Liberation theology in chapter 6, my proposal for a new methodology which I claim will join and perhaps eventually even feplace Feminist and Liberation theologies.

Further similarities between these two theologies involve content as well as method. However, content like their agreement on God as the critical principle on the side of the oppressed, or Jesus' salvific potential as relative to the group of persons in question, will be passed over in favor of methodological points. Similarly, the fact that both are process oriented (theologizing, not Process thought oriented though there are hints that that is a next step for both) rather than static systems (theology), and the extent to which each relies on the data of the social sciences are both methodological concerns. However, when we contrast them point for point methodologically we find that these two aspects are taken for granted.

The major methodological similarity is the extent to which both Feminist and Liberation theologies call for a renewed understanding of universality, and the extent to which the discipline is challenged and changed because of this. By their clearly articulated particularity, their strategic and prophetic roles within the discipline they invite (some might say force) the discipline to ask if there is any validity

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to its universal claims. This challenge involves a new self-understanding for theology.

The realization that all theology is partial, limited and contextual, or as Sheila Davaney has written "self-consciously provisional,"[7] will help to equalize the power relationships which are inherent in it. The power to name ourselves, our experiences, our God, our world needs to be returned to its rightful owners/sharers. It is a power which has been taken from the masses and which needs to be returned so that the variety of names and claims on the Whole of Reality can be articulated.

We are aided in rethinking the question of universality by Feminist and Liberation perspectives. They seem to suggest that if every theological expression is partial, limited and contextual then the most adequate model to follow is one in which as many voices as possible can be heard. This is not to imply that simply adding voices to the chorus will de facto guarantee a 'full' articulation of the God-human-world relationship. This is why such efforts need to be mediated by methods or frameworks which impose certain criteria and at the same time structure the data which is accepted into comparable categories. Then and only then can we say that a particular theological expression has universal application.

Since both Feminist and Liberation theologies challenge the discipline of theology to a new self-understanding via a new definition of universality we can see why both result in new ethical positions. Both depend on an interstructuring of elements for any position so that dogmatic and confessional a priori statements are not acceptable. Rather, the ethical considerations generated by the respective methodologies are conditioned by the theological methods.

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It is important to point out that neither Feminist nor Liberation theology is the exclusive territory of academicians. Each has its share of scholars but both are worked on by activists and organizers, ministers and priests. This accounts for the uneven quality of some of the literature but it guarantees that narrowly conceived categories will never prevail.

These similarities between Feminist and Liberation theologies do not tell the whole story. Their differences express the more subtle points and prove that all strategic or indigenous theologies are far from alike.

As noted above the starting points in experience shared in a group vs. praxis done in a community are quite different, especially with regard to their results. Likewise the use of sources noted above indicates that there is ample room for cross-fertilization. So too the differing relationships to the institutional Church and the various understandings of the role of the theologian indicate the thrust of feminist efforts toward theologizing and Latin American efforts toward theology.

Both share a view of the importance of the social/structural aspects of sin. But they differ as to the content of this aspect. Feminists identify patriarchy as the manifestation of evil. While some feminist theologians see sexism as the source of evil (e.g. Daly) others understand it as the result of the human propensity toward evil (e.g. Ruether) which is also manifest in other structures (e.g. racism). But all would agree that the social/structural manifestation is patriarchy in one form or another and all would aim efforts at its destruction. Liberation theologians are equally divided on the extent

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to which class is the bottomline for their analysis, but divided on how it is the case not whether it is the case.

Another content difference rests with the priority which is given to the experience of various groups. In Feminist theology women's experience of oppression has a privileged place in theologizing. What women express as our struggle for selfhood in a patriarchal context is given credence over traditional views of women, men's experience, or even so-called human experience. In Liberation theology the same priority is placed on the experience and efforts of the struggling poor. It is from these people whose lives depend on their efforts to change unjust situations that we derive our insights about 'the way things ought to be.'

This does not mean that feminist theologians ignore the cries of the poor, especially of poor men, nor that Liberation theologians do not listen to the particular experiences and needs of women in every situation. But it does mean that the configuration of meaning derived from either set of experiences shifts with a variable that is not common to them. More will be said about this later on, but for now it is sufficient to say that this is a point at which a new synthetic method will be helpful. It will aid feminists in bringing class issues and the urgency of material oppression to bear on their concerns and it will aid liberationists in bringing to bear an analysis of sexism and an awareness of particularity to bear on their concerns.

Feminist theology tends to be an elite movement which has grown up because of the interest of academic women in dealing with questions of ultimate meaning and value. Its spirituality thus far is geared toward literary and anthropological materials, most of which mean little

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to women who frequent mainline churches.[8] Liberation theology tends to be a mass movement at least in activity if not in articulation. Its spirituality is more difficult to discern but initial indicators point toward a traditional (seemingly Ignatian, though this needs to be explored) spirituality fused with a socio-political understanding.[9] We also have evidence of a revitalization of folk religion (e.g. worship of Our Lady of Guadalupe) and a reappropriation of traditional symbols for liberation themes (e.g. the crucified Jesus is a brother in the struggle). This difference between Feminist and Liberation theologies is another growing edge for a synthetic method.

Two additional issues point out salient differences. The notion of divinity in Feminist theology ranges from God the Father with major reservation to Goddess, while in Liberation theology it is usually the traditional God the Father or Lord. The crux of the issue is the extent to which traditional sources can be revised or must be abandoned. Liberation theology, unlike the gynergetic elements of Feminist theology has taken a clear position on the necessity for continuity with the past. Such feminists would argue that they too are in continuity with a hidden past. But their willingness to explore and embrace certain unpopular and potentially threatening (to Christianity) symbols is a good example for Liberation theologians of how far we must move to express our insights authentically.

This is a challenge to the institutional Church basis of Liberation theology and an invitation to push beyond the established limits of Christianity to new expressions of the in-breaking of God/Goddess in the world. For both Feminist and Liberation theologies there is a need to develop symbols beyond the traditional scope. This brings

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with it a mandate to explore other faith traditions, something that both schools are just beginning to do with any sophistication.

A second issue which illumines their differences is the specific way the data of the social sciences is incorporated into the doing of theology. In Feminist theology, as mentioned earlier, the hermeneutics of suspicion around the social sciences has to do with the normative nature of female experience of oppression and the way in which that experience is interstructured with other particular forms of oppression.

In Liberation theology the hermeneutics of suspicion around the social sciences has to do with the normative nature of Marxist social analysis and the way in which those categories interface with other forms of oppression. This difference is not surprising but once again we find an element for a new methodology. To the extent that feminist theologians use their own experience and not some objective measures and to the extent that liberation theologians rely on doctrine at the expense of personal experience the two schools will continue to need each other. Alternatively, they can be fused into a method which will handle both poles which I think Feminist Liberation theology will do.

A look at the four methodological elements which we discussed in chapter 4 provides further clarification. The cultural elements which was stressed by Meland has already been alluded to in the above discussion of the social sciences from feminist and Marxist perspectives. But it is helpful to see how the cultural element intersects with the experiential element which Lonergan stressed. The self-understanding of the knower can only occur within an historical/cultural matrix. This dialectical relationship between knower and culture is problematic for both Feminist and Liberation theologies.

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In Feminist theology self-understanding is stressed within the immediate surroundings. But often the larger cultural matrix is passed over (e.g. the international influences on North American Feminist theology are minimal) or blanket statements are made which reflect insensitivity to certain groups. One example of this difficulty is seen in the feminist approaches to ritual genital mutilation which is practiced in Africa. Although Fran P. Hosken's research documents atrocities beyond belief for Westerners, some feminists, especially some of those working in international Church circles, call protests against such violence the result of imperialism from the West.[10] This presents the dilemma which only an interstructured analysis can address.

Surely there are cultural differences such that the liberal approach of letting each culture decide for itself can be appreciated. But at some point the larger picture of violence against women must become a part of the analysis and be used to relativize any cultural expression. Thus the dialectic between personal experience and cultural context results in a renewed understanding of both.

In Liberation theology the experience-culture dialectic is evident in the case of birth control. Although the Church's position is well known, many Latin Americans cannot afford large families. On the other hand many realize that poverty is no excuse for genocide. A dual challenge arises out of this experience in this particular cultural situation. It is a challenge for the institutional Church as it reassesses its position on birth control in light of pastoral practice. It is a challenge for the people who may interpret the official position in light of their needs as a people. In any case the need for choice in the decision about birth control is what emerges out of the experience-

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culture dialectic. But it is a need for choice informed on both sides by the reality of the other.

Kaufman's emphasis on God or mystery as a foundational category in theology and Tracy's insistence on a responsible use of the tradition are related in a similarly dialectical way. But neither of these, much less their relationship, can be understood apart from experience and/or tradition.

God in Feminist theology is taken to mean what the Christian tradition has taught, namely, the historical manifestation of Otherness which is made known in human form through the death and resurrection of Jesus. A revisionist hermeneutic applied to the tradition from a feminist perspective yields something quite different. For example, the Goddess imagery is offered as an alternative which counters the exclusively male symbol 'God' in Western culture. Jesus is questioned as an adequate savior figure such that he emerges as a brother for some and as just another avatar for others.

When these latter expressions are taken alone they make sense for certain limited groups. But put into a cultural mix, for example Black and Hispanic culture mixed with White middle class culture, such expressions seem to arise from rarified analysis. They seem out of touch with the faith of many people for whom the feminist lens of analysis is but one among many. In this instance Feminist Theology could benefit from the Liberation priority on the experience of the struggling poor in order to choose images for God/Goddess which are based in faith experience. Then its insistence on politically correct images for divinity would be grounded in the life stories which make up a culture.

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Similarly in Latin American Liberation theology the notion of Jesus as liberator of the captives is variously received. Those who agree that it is in accord with the authentic interpretation of the tradition are met by those who consider it a politicization of the Gospel. My point is not simply to assess these positions (though it seems clear to me that Christianity is a messianic and revolutionary force such that Jesus as liberator is axiomatic) but to indicate that the mystery-tradition dialectic is a source for theological reflection. Liberation theology could use cross-cultural comparison as well as a feminist analysis to begin to cope with its own widely divergent views of Jesus.

In both cases of Experience-Culture and Mystery-Tradition applications we can see that Feminist and Liberation theologies are enriched by dialectical approaches. These could be structured Experience-Mystery, Culture-Tradition, or Experience-Tradition, Culture-Mystery. In any or all combinations the dynamic interconnection is clear. It is an interconnectedness which we will insist upon in a renewed method.

The similarities and differences between Feminist and Liberation theologies can be summed up best by a look at the fourth element of each of their methods. We have compared starting points, critiques of sources, etc. but we have not seen the various ways that these methodologies renew themselves and move on to new material.

In the case of Feminist theology there is an ever expanding horizon of persons and concerns which keep the process going. On the face of it this seems to function well. But closer examination reveals a chronic problem for Feminist theology namely its seemingly ad hoc nature. This is the extent to which it is dependent upon the experiences

of the formulators, and further upon their willingness to expose themselves to new, different, often threatening realities. Even this willingness does not provide guidelines for how to enlarge one's perspective. How do I choose between enlarging my analysis with the perspective of the aged or the handicapped, for example?

The question can be asked another way, specifically, what guarantees that I will be vigilant in my efforts to obtain justice and to rethink the God-human-world relationship from either of these perspectives? This is not to say that Feminist theology as it is currently conceived is not open to and seeking the kind of analytic coalition implied by investigation of new concerns. But it is to say that there is evidence in the spiritualist side of Feminist theology that this important broadening is not taking place.

In the case of Liberation theology the renewed theological concepts lead to clarification of new orthopraxis. Here we have a solution to the feminist limitation in the use of concrete, traditional theological concepts and the immersion of the theologian in praxis or the necessity of peoples' lives. While this is an appropriate complement for Feminist theology it raises some different problems for Liberation theology.

There is a danger when one is involved in praxis of seeing only the immediate problems. There is a tendency to focus on the needs of the moment without reflecting on their implications. For example, Nobel Prize notwithstanding, the work of Mother Theresa in Calcutta is widely criticized for not addressing the structural issues which lead to the deaths she attends. It is often noted in such cases that the ministry or praxis of the moment gets in the way of and may even reinforce the

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larger issues involved.

Here the fourth point of Feminist theology's method provides some help. Insistence on an ever expanding horizon of persons and concerns guarantees that the needs of the moment will never be the end of the analysis or action. Liberation theology can appropriate this openendedness just as Feminist theology can appropriate orthopraxis to balance their respective methodological limitations as they struggle to articulate more clearly the God-human-world relationship.

These insights about the relationship between Feminist and Liberation theologies' shortcomings make me realize that an even better solution than the patchwork one alluded to above is the fashioning of a new method. It will not only correct the problems mentioned above but it will, hopefully, push the faith horizon beyond what either of these methods alone can handle. It is for this reason that I offer Feminist Liberation theology in chapter 6.

This new method will benefit from the comparison of these two methods in three ways. First it will include the strengths and weaknesses of both Feminist and Liberation theologies and will attempt to correct for their weaknesses. Second, it will be made up of four elements which emerged out of our discussion of method in construction: Experience, Culture, Mystery and Tradition. Third, it will be an effort to hold those four elements together in a dialectical way which we found to be mutually correcting and quite creative in the methods considered alone.

The adequacy of this method, as in any method, can only be tested in application to academic and pastoral problems. This will be the conclusion of our study (chapter 7). Hence we will be using the comparison

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outlined in this chapter as the ground for a new theological method, and we will be testing its adequacy in two cases. Hopefully this will suggest even more comparisons which will result in new methods.

## NOTES

## CHAPTER 5

[1]Women in Dialogue (Mujeres para el Dialogo), translation coordinated by Ruth Fitzpatrick (Notre Dame, Indiana: Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry, 1979).

[2]There were a number of accounts published. Among them, Faith Annette Sand, "Women at Puebla: A Paternalistic Pat on the Head," The Witness, Vol. 62, No. 4, April 1979, pp. 7-8.

[3]Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978). Charlotte Bunch, editor of Quest: A Feminist Quarterly. Cf. articles cited in chapter 2, note 28.

[4]I am referring here to denominational task forces on women and to the few inroads which have been made to render church school curricula non-sexist. However, these efforts are few, far between and generally resisted.

[5]Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ Liberator (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978 (1972)).

[6]Sheila Collins, A Different Heaven and Earth (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1974).

[7]Sheila Davaney, "Feminist Theology and Christian Theology: An Essay on Beyond God the Father," in Perspectives on Feminist Theology, edited by Mary E. Hunt and Rosino Gibellini, (Brescia, Italy: Querianan, 1980).

[8]Penelope Washbourn, Seasons of Women (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979); Carol P. Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

[9]Alejandro Cussianovich, Religious Life and the Poor (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979).

[10]Fran P. Hosken, editor, Women's International Network News. Lexington, Mass. Almost every issue has information on clitoridectomy, infibulation and other atrocities in gruesome detail.



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## CHAPTER 6

## FEMINIST LIBERATION THEOLOGY: A METHOD FOR DIALECTICAL CONVERSION

> But my purpose is not to degrade the old theology whose grateful children we are and remain. It has been rather to hint from afar that our time calls also us theologians sleeping under the broom tree of orthodoxy like Elijah in old days: "Surge, grandis tibi restat via"--"Arise a long journey lies ahead of you."
>
> Karl Rahner, sj
> Marquette University, 1979

Discussion of Feminist and Liberation theologies and comparison of their respective methodologies reveal that there will always be theological problems which are difficult to solve and that there will always be inadequacies in the best of methods. This seems to be of the nature of the theological beast which blunders through the thicket hoping to luck upon a bit of daylight on the God-human-world relationship.

Contemporary application of catastrophe theory to the social sciences suggests that there are finite possibilities for predicting how and when certain changes will occur.[1] The 'God' variable clearly differentiates theology from the social sciences but there seems to be a parallel in the drawing of certain parameters around the theological process. Attention to method is the way that we guarantee that the issues pertinent to theology will be raised in a systematic way and that the solutions are accepted or rejected on the basis of some mutually agreed upon criteria. No theology can offer more than this since there is no method which can guarantee anything more than new questions.

Feminist Liberation theology is my proposal for a method adequate to handle contemporary theology. I offer it realizing that it is one

among many possible methods. I offer it with the modest claim that it is, in my opinion, the most adequate framework for centering theological discourse on urgent issues and moving that discourse from its starting point in action through systematic reflection and on to renewed action.

I have stated earlier that advances in theological method arise when new content is admitted to the discipline. Throughout the exposition and comparison of Feminist and Liberation theologies I have tried to show the connections between method and content. Nowhere in the comparison would I point to a methodological issue which was not illuminated by specific content and vice versa. In proposing a new method I must begin with at least a sketch of content lest I be accused of contradicting my own observations.

Little was said in the previous chapters on the place of presuppositions in the various theologies. This is because in theology it is considered axiomatic that each theologian has a set of presuppositions which ground her/his work. It is difficult to discern these from the content unless they ar spelled out because they tend to be interwoven. But, in order to have the full program exposed here I will include these foundational elements.

Feminist Liberation theology is in process. I will begin the discussion by spelling out my presuppositions. Next I will outline the four elements of the method and mention how they are related. I will explain why the name 'Feminist Liberation theology' was chosen. Then I will critique the method according to the five canons of adequacy which were mentioned earlier and see how this method fulfills them. I will articulate what I consider to be the major impact of this method

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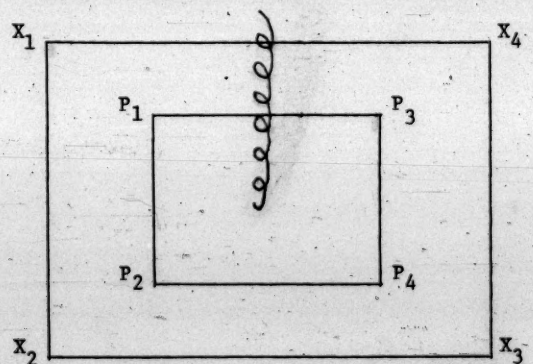
on the discipline, particularly as the notion of what is universal is unpacked. I will acknowledge the shortcomings of the method so that the future directions of its development will be clear. Finally, in chapter 7, I will use the method in an academic and a pastoral case thus inviting the reader to assess its adequacy in practice.

My presuppositions as I begin to theologize include:

1. forgiveness is possible even in the most horrendous situations because sin has been overcome
2. hope is warranted at all times because of the death and resurrection of Jesus
3. courage to act justly is expected by the Christian community because of commitment to the Gospel
4. starting point for praxis/analysis is with the struggling poor because these people have divine priority.

These four presuppositions arise out of my life within the Christian community. But they are in dialogue with the four elements which make up my method. They are in constant process of being critiqued and molded in that dialogue. The relationship can be pictured as follows:




such that $P_1$-$P_4$ are the presuppositions; such that $X_1$-$X_4$ are the elements of a theological method.

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The presuppositions are part of my self-understanding and tradition. They are dependent on my sense of God and they are firmly grounded in my culture. A look at the four elements of the method will make the interaction clearer.

First, after the fashion of Lonergan, I stress the necessity of an understanding of experience. This is not meant to be an all-encompassing term, but it is meant to delineate the personal and communal history which we bring to theologizing. It is the set of events and reactions to them which shape personality and demand response. Experience is the answer to the question "What happened?" My experience is the claim that I make about what is true for me.

Personal experience borders on solipsism if it is not mediated by community experience. Likewise the community's experience tends toward abstraction if it is not mediated by individual experiences. In Feminist Liberation theology this double sense of experience will be maintained.

As we look at these four elements it is important to note that no one element can be understood in isolation from the others. All are related dialectically, i.e., in such a way as to interact and produce an ever evolving whole which we call theology.

The second element, which Meland suggested, is culture. This is seemingly broad as well but we will understand it in two senses to sharpen the meaning. First, culture is that set of practices, expectations and institutions which give structure to experience. There are an infinite number of combinations of these elements so that a diversity of cultures is a given in this method. In a secondary way, culture is that particular set of practices, expectations and institutions which

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inform a theologian such that she/he will make certain choices, ask certain questions and pursue certain issues. Every culture has to be understood in both senses.

It is difficult to take account of the macrocosm or culture in the first sense. Hence theology is charged with being self-consciously indigenous with attention to the larger picture of which it is a part. I will use culture in this method in the secondary or particular sense, and hope that the larger picture will be revealed by a number of these particular expressions taken together. However, this does not mean that the understanding of the particular culture can ever be complete apart from its context, i.e., the larger culture.

As we begin to unpack the elements it is important to note that this method depends on the dialectical relationship between elements and between the various dimensions of the elements. This double dialectic is the basis of dialectical conversion. It is dialectical because the various elements are in tension with one another such that experience and culture considered apart from one another yield quite different results than experience-culture in a dialectical relationship. Conversion signals that this dialectical relationship results in changes in both the theologian and the 'object' of her/his theology.

An example of this may be helpful. The conversion called forth initially in women on the basis of a feminist analysis demands a dialectical conversion for men and eventually for conscious women. It happens as follows. The woman's insight informs the theological process in what we call a feminist way. She proceeds to theologize out of new experience. The man must not only work from his experience of the new situation created by the woman's experience but he must change his

relationship to structures (i.e., he must look at his male privilege) because of her experience. His response forms a new situation. She then theologizes out of the new situation and adds more input on the basis of her experience of it. As such she participates in dialectical conversion as he did since both of them have acted on structural issues on the basis of their experience.

The woman's initial insight set the dialectic into motion, the man's experience created its context and the woman's renewed experience completed it. We can say then that the experience of oppression sets the process into motion, the response in praxis creates its context and the new relationships which result from praxis complete the process. This last step also sets up the initial stage again. We will see this in action in the concluding applications.

The third element of this method is mystery, after the fashion of Kaufman's remarks on God. I do not name this dimension 'God' for fear of circumscribing prematurely the meaning of this component especially in light of how the word 'God' carries patriarchal overtones. I choose mystery instead because language about God continues to develop as specific terms like Ground of Being, Ground of Possibility and the like come into use. 'Mystery' seems to be an appropriate generic term.

If experience and culture appear general without elaboration then mystery is surely vacuous. In Feminist Liberation theological method I propose it as a concrete component which needs to be taken into account in every analysis. Given my Christian presuppositions stated above I do not mean mystery as God in a vague sense but in the sense of that which operates as a critical principle in the world moving the whole of creation toward the goals of love and justice.

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I grant that this understanding of mystery limits my method to theology done from within a faith perspective, a perspective in which the reality of divinity is considered to be functional in the world. There may be times when this reality seems absent (e.g. the Holocaust) or when the presence of mystery is not easily discernible (e.g. in the institutional Church at times). Still I insist that we theologize 'as if' mystery were present because such an element relativizes the process in ways that can not be predicted nor measured. Mystery accounts for the surprise in theology.

We can see from the element of mystery how the presuppositions are in dialectical relationship with the method. I would not be able to hold my presuppositions about forgiveness or hope if I did not root myself in a belief in a God who/which is on the side of the oppressed, a God who communicates Godself through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and whose spirit is present in communities of struggle. These presuppositions are challenged by the mystery present in the world so that even these are open to change. The presuppositions form a spiral as they interact with the elements of the method, shaping and being shaped, changing and being changed.

The fourth element of Feminist Liberation theology is <u>tradition</u>. By tradition I mean the cumulative stories of a person and a people which ground their self-understanding and invite their participation in a future which is <u>connected</u> to the past. Tradition in a narrow sense refers to the tradition of the Church (often signified by a capital 'T'). But here we mean it in a broader sense including the lost history of women and the passed over experiences of marginalized people.

Tradition helps us to ground theology in an ongoing quest for

meaning and value. It helps us to understand that we are asking/answering questions in continuity with the people who professed belief in many of our presuppositions. It helps us to identify ourselves as part of the progression of humanity, especially that sector of it whose lives and deaths have been witness to the fact that loving well and acting justly are all that ultimately matter, our intense yearnings after God notwithstanding.

Now that we have seen the four elements of the method and their interrelationship via dialectical conversion it seems appropriate to reflect on the name Feminist Liberation theology. I can anticipate questions like what is feminist about it, or what is liberationist about it, or is it really theology? Having seen the method develop our of Feminist and Liberation methods it is hard to isolate their elements since I have argued that it arises out of the synthesis of the two. But the particularly feminist highlights and the particularly liberationist highlights can be isolated.

Feminist theology provides several important components. The premium placed on individual experience within a group of people in Feminist theology leads us to value particularity. Within an gender group, race, class, etc. there is always the particular experience of that woman or that Chicana or that poor person which cannot be overlooked when generalizations or categories are employed. Next, the invisibility of women in the culture helps us to search within the mainstream for remnants of women's experience which have been obscured by the power of patriarchal analysis. A look at this power relationship within all classes, races, etc. is a feminist dimension to our method.

The openness to mystery which is not necessarily Christian is

a feminist characteristic in Feminist Liberation theology. Whether Goddess or Ground of Possibility we know that we can do theology without the necessary conclusion that Christian terms, however revised, are adequate. This frees us to reevaluate Christianity as well as to explore the myriad of options. Finally, tradition understood from the perspective of those who have little stake in its preservation is a mark of feminist work. Over all we can say that the process of theologizing and the tentativity of all conclusions spring from the fact that feminists are not dedicated to the preservation of the status quo.

The model is liberationist for a number of reasons. At the outset experience which is praxis-based is an obvious sign of the liberation influence. Culture understood from the underside of history, from the perspective of the dispossessed, is a liberation strand.

The element of mystery which is in conversation with the Christian presuppositions which I spelled out is not contentless. It is decidely historical and always on the side of the oppressed. Mystery is that spirit which guides us away from injustice and invites us to witness to the saving power of love. Further signs of the liberation method include tradition which is understandable through the eyes of the marginalized among us who have never been in the mainstream. It means bringing to bear whole new language and experience sets.

Feminist Liberation theology, like Liberation theology, demands radical political/ecclesiastical involvement such that the ideology of church/state separation falls away. Likewise, it invites participation from all kinds of people—young and old, educated and uneducated, wealthy and poor—so as to expand the meaning of Church in the world. This is surely a liberation insight.

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But is all of this theology? Is it perhaps feminist theory mixed with Marxist social analysis couched in God-language? Feminist Liberation method is theological insofar as it raises questions of ultimate meaning and value and proposes that the answers to such questions can be discerned in continuity with the Christian values of love and justice. It raises a profound challenge to the discipline when it takes as decisive the process of exploring such questions rather than emphasizing the systematic way of answering them.

It could be argued that Feminist Liberation method does not ground a theology if one does not accept the importance of theologizing which will lead to a theology. But the history of theological method (cf. Tracy in chapter 4) indicates that it has always shifted with the theological wind in order to meet the needs of the day. Feminist Liberation theology is, it seems to me, a synthetic approach which will meet the needs of our time. The test of this method is in its application, both in how useful it is for helping people make sense of the Christian faith and for making pastoral decisions which reflect that faith.

We have assessed the adequacy of Feminist and Liberation theologies according to their conformity to certain canons. We saw that individually they measured up quite well to the criteria but that their shortcomings indicated their growing edges. We suggested that a combined method holds even more provise, an assertion we will now examine.

Feminist Liberation theology is pluralistic to the extent that it invites a variety of experience sets into dialogue. It is open to orthodoxy as long as that is translated into orthopraxis so that groups which seem widely divergent can move toward the same goal through action. This means, for example, that the Marxist whose mystery is quite different

from the Christian God can still engage with Christians in reflection over efforts to alleviate starvation, provided that the Marxist allows the notion of transcendence and the Christian does not force her/his categories.[2] In fact, Feminist Liberation theology presents a new definition of theology which involved an ever increasing number of perspectives being brought to bear on the God-human-world relationship. The key thing that the method provides is a framework within which to share those perspectives.

It is ecumenical for much the same reason. The emphasis here is on an ecumenism which arises out of shared particularities. This is not meant to produce a homogenized mass of rootless liberals. Rather it is intended as a method adequate to the task of taking well defined experiences and providing common parameters so that they can be shared.

My own theology is an example of this phenomenon. My theology comes from my Catholic heritage. I do not foresee a change in that because it seems to me that denominational affiliation is deeply rooted at least for Catholics. A colleague of mine whose theology emerges from her Methodist roots will express herself quite differently on, for example, spirituality. But neither of us is permitted to give up the formative backgrounds out of which our various expressions emerge in order to speak meaningfully to each other. Instead, using Feminist Liberation method we come together with the intention that such differences will be compared (Experience to Experience, Tradition to Tradition). The differences in Experience and Tradition will be mediated by the similarities of Culture and the serendipitous effects of Mystery.

Feminist Liberation theology is eschatological insofar as it emphasizes the messianic/prophetic strain of Christianity. As such

it critiques the future from the perspective of present personal/social structures and relies on the past to express continuity with a God who judges the unjust and the unloving. It takes for granted the need for social/structural change and expects that the precondition for the possibility of the fullness of the reign of God (in popular albeit exclusive parlance, the kingdom) can and must be achieved in this world.

Feminist Liberation theology is historical to the extent to which it is based on events (e.g. death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christian community's faith over time, the individual's experience, the group's developing culture, etc.) which shape concepts. It is rooted in the struggle of believers to synthesize a time-bound yet timeless set of documents (i.e., Scripture) with their life experience. This is an effort to live authentically in a religious tradition which has a normative faith commitment and a concern with transcendence.

The historical character of Feminist Liberation theology has a contemporary mode which is expressed by praxis in specific struggles. These will form the history out of which future generations will theologize. This points out the key insight namely the ongoingness of the community of people who struggle because of Christian commitment.

Finally, Feminist Liberation theology is pastoral in both its origin and its application. A communal praxis starting point guarantees that theologizing will be connected to the needs of the community. The continued testing of concepts in the crucible of struggle means that this theology cannot be written in a library carrel, except as a retrospective, but must be lived out in the work of love and justice.

'Application' of such a method is something of a misnomer. It is useful as a way of insisting that Feminist Liberation theology is

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not content specific but can be used, with some modification, in a variety of settings. This is the case because it is primarily a method and not a system.

Now that we have looked at Feminist Liberation theology in terms of the canons of adequacy we can see that it surpasses either of the two components taken alone. But it does not exhaust the possibilities of any one of the canons. It could be more ecumenical, for example, but that will come as it is used and modified by use.

This analysis helps us to see how the method is really more than the sum of the four elements taken together. The result is dialectical conversion which is a dynamic process which takes place in the interplay of the four elements. It is best understood in action but can be described in four distinct though interconnected moments:

1. Starting point in personal experience of oppression which is the necessity out of which one engages in liberation praxis.
2. Reflection on the cultural context in which one works/lives with a critical evaluation of sexism, racism, heterosexism, imperialism, classism as they effect the sources and content of theology.
3. Acknowledgement of the working of the mysterious (God/Goddess) in contemporary life on the basis of historical claims about God as the critical principle which stands over against unjust structures and unloving persons.
4. Reevaluation and reappropriation of the cultural and religious tradition on the basis of a hermeneutic of suspicion. The reappropriation leads to new praxis so this step returns us to personal experience/liberation praxis.

The dialectical relationship of the four elements can be seen

throughout. For example, in step 4 tradition and experience result in a new experience; in step 3 mystery understood in nontraditional terms results in a new experience. The conversion takes place when after moving through the steps and integrating the presuppositions the theologian emerges with a new self-understanding and a renewed commitment to restructure society accordingly. The stress on the theologian underlines how important it is to help nonprofessionals understand themselves as theologians. The stress on the structures underlines how crucial it is that the theologian be aware of the responsibility which theology has to address systemic realities.

By theologian in this renewed sense I mean one who not only facilitates the questions of ultimate meaning and value (as feminists would have it) nor one who simply provides Christian categories for reflection (as liberation theologians would have it). The theologian in this method is one who has her/his own presuppositions firmly in hand but is willing to subject them to the rigors of praxis and the scrutiny of the four elements of the method. This means that the theologian need not be an academician. She/he must be committed to a project or a group in which she/he works and theologizes.

Feminist Liberation theology can be schematized as follows:

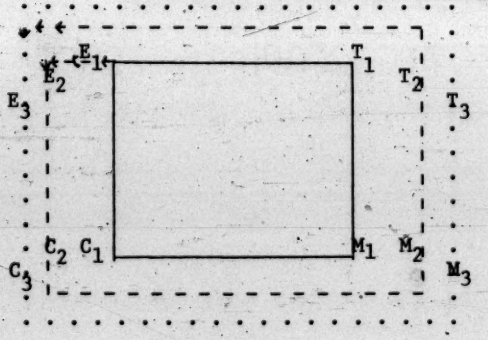



Figure 1

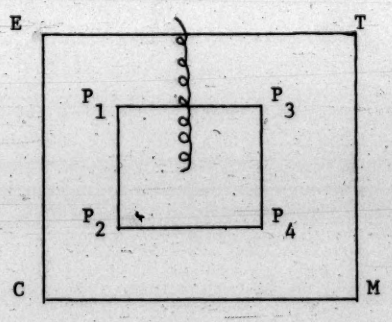
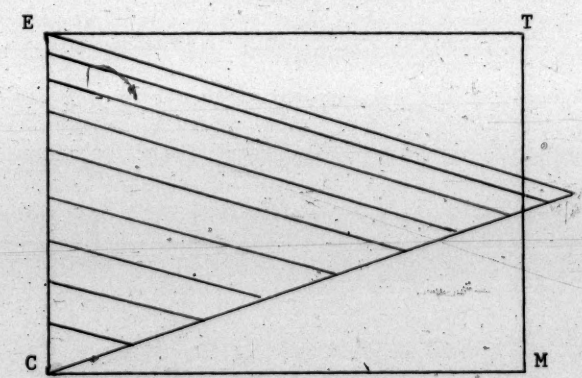


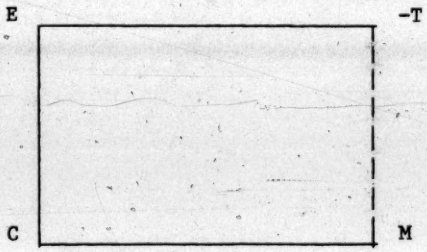

Figure 2

No one dimensional drawing is adequate to show the dialectical relationship between the elements. But we can see the basic flow of the process in Figure 1. We can see that the completion of the process results in a renewed experience. Likewise we can see in Figure 2 that the presuppositional spiral keeps pace with each full circuit of the method.

One problem which the above pictures do not reveal is the relative weight which needs to be placed on each element at any given moment in the process. Looking at the pictures and reading the method described we get no indication that in some situations the four components will be present and taken seriously in quite different configurations. For example, in analyzing a painful and complex issue like abortion with this method there are a variety of possible configurations. Freedom of choice and the general welfare of the woman are set in the cultural context in which abortion is considered to be a crime by some and an act of violence against women by others. Many other concerns attend the issue but we can see by the above issues that experience and culture far outweigh the tradition of the Church and the mysterious aspects of the decision. This sort of nuance can be pictured as follows:



Another important refinement of the model is the negative side of the whole process. There may be a lack of any one of the four elements in which case we would have to say that the discussion is not theological though it may well be illumined by use of the method. Or, there may be an occasion when one element has virtually no precedent. For example, artificial insemination is a relatively new theological issue which has little or no traditional material. This would be shown as:




Before we proceed to the application of the method it is important to say what such a method is not. It is not a framework which works magically to produce desired effects on command. It is not designed like a computer to return only some form of what has been programmed. In short it will not guarantee that the 'right' position will result from its use. But it will guarantee that the right questions will be asked and that the discussion will be focused. Finally, it will assure that leaving out any one element will produce an inadequate analysis.

The elements have been defined so as to point in the direction of greater inclusivity in theologizing. They have been arranged so as to offer the possibility of praxis based construction and to prevent the continued hegemony of conceptual construction. This is a major shift in theological method, one which changes the nature of the discipline

in a substantial way. It changes it according to the redefinition of universal which we examined earlier.

Previously a statement in theology could be called universal on the basis of its coherence and then applied to a wide variety of situations, even though it was based on the experience of one person or one strand of the tradition. For example, the injunction against violence has been taken as an absolute without regard to the situations in which it is applied.

From a Feminist Liberation theology perspective such an injunction is examined with special focus on the context in which it is considered. It will be modified in circumstances where the socio-cultural context is a violent one (e.g. poverty). In such a case the mandate loses its universal application and is overruled by the demands of love and justice. The result of this analysis is a renewed universal, namely the imperative to act justly in situations of systemic violence. This can be applied from a variety of perspectives, especially by those who benefit from the status quo, i.e., the wealthy whose relinquishment of resources would be an example of dialectical conversion.

In the above case our concern is with what happens when universal no longer means the abstraction of a particular case for general application but the broadest possible sampling of perspectives. The basic changes are in the role of the theologian. No longer can the theologian content herself/himself with simple exposition. According to this model that would be to rehearse the history of theology not to do theology. This is not to say that such historical work is inadequate; it is to say that it is history and not theology as newly understood. If she/he is going to be a theological practitioner in the '80's the theologian

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will have to make a commitment to a community and/or project within which to work.

There are numerous problems with such an approach. Without denying the importance of what has gone before and without being exhaustive in my treatment of the difficulties let me point out a few and offer some initial reflections on them.

First, Feminist Liberation theology is a time-consuming and complex method. I have not begun to spell out all of the implications nor to diagram all of the possible interactions. The time spent collecting the data needed to begin theologizing in the manner outlined could be used to develop a systematic theology. But when one completed the task one would have a systematic theology. However, when one uses this method one ends up with a changed theologian, a changed situation and a set of self-consciously provisional answers to questions of ultimate meaning and value. It seems to me that theology in the '80's is responsible not for the production of more tomes but for the creation of substantive personal and structural change. With this mandate the complexities of method disappear in the simplicity of applying four basic points to praxis/reflection.

A second critique of Feminist Liberation theology is that it provides few categories for uniform theologizing. I acknowledge that the critique is essentially correct and add that this is by design. The situations into which we are called to theologize do not admit any easy answers, any neat solutions. The horrors of hunger and the threat of nuclear destruction, the violence against women and children in pornography and the ill-treatment of the elderly, etc. are the kinds of situations which demand theological attention. These are too diverse

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and too devastating to be contained in the pre-conceived categories of traditional theology. Only after we have made sense of and made changes in these circumstances can we take the time to cluster such issues. Feminist Liberation theology is interested in the ways in which systems have an impact on individuals. It is a rigorous and integrated process for making sense of and enhancing the God-human-world relationship, not a neat set of categories for intellectual work.

A third critique levelled at Feminist Liberation theology is that it is not a well defined system or catalogue of issues which can be passed on easily. This point arises especially with regard to the religious instruction of children. To this difficulty I respond that it seems infinitely more practical to teach a method which can be adapted to the needs and abilities of the person than to teach content which changes in each situation.

The problem we face currently is with mature Christians whose faith was shaped by content as children but who are now unable to handle new data without guilt and/or confusion. Feminist Liberation theological method would be taught at the level of sophistication appropriate to the age and experience of the person. It would equip the person with four elements of analysis. But above all it would instill in Christians of all ages the importance of acting on faith commitments, of grounding life in a praxis community.

A fourth among many problems with the proposed method is the difficulty which arises when we attempt to compare positions which are arrived at by use of the method. For example, it is easily conceivable that my work in a prison analysed via the four elements might lead me to conclude that capital punishment is wrong, whereas my chaplain

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colleague's work in the same place using the same four categories might lead her to an opposite conclusion. Where do we go from here in our effort to live and work together?

Granted Feminist Liberation theology does not present definitive answers. But it does offer a way to focus the questions which we will both ask within the limits of the categories established by the method. It provides guidance for the areas of concern which we must include if our efforts are to be properly theological and not just ethical or sociological.

This may seem to be a small contribution, but when we reflect on the number of disagreements which prevent collaborative work which could be avoided if people were using the same general categories for analysis it takes on greater significance. For instance, an argument in favor of capital punishment which does not take account of the experience of the condemned is not theological according to this method. Or, a counter argument which does not take account of the sociological data on deterrence is not theological.

What these shortcomings point to is the fact that no method will solve all problems, nor is any method capable of producing harmony. But Feminist Liberation theology is an attempt to open the theological process to the whole Christian family so that more diverse experiences can be brought to bear.

It is also a way to do theology which can be described to the nontheological world and thus encourages dialogue between theology and its counterparts in different fields. Hopefully this renewed method will spark the dynamism and excitement which is inherent in the God-human-world relationship. Only its application to concrete academic and pastoral situations will reveal whether or not this is the case.

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## NOTES

## CHAPTER 6

[1]Rene Thoms, Structural Stability and Morphogenesis: An Outline of a General Theory of Models (Reading, Mass.: W.A. Benjamin, 1975).

[2]Note that mystery as a category for purposes of this method is informed by my Christian roots. However in application it is a functional category for ultimacy. Many expressions for ultimacy do not involve theistic affirmations.

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## CHAPTER 7

## ACADEMIC AND PASTORAL APPLICATION

> Their lives are offered for the healing of the nations. They are taking sides now, that sides need not be taken forever.
>
> Daniel Berrigan
> Mission Trends No. 4

Feminist Liberation theology is best understood and most adequately assessed in its application to various situations. Then we can see the method in action and decide what changes need to be made for it to function better. In order to conclude my study I will use the method in an academic case, namely, the formulation of God-language in the Christian community, and in a pastoral case, namely, the development and articulation of a Christian response to the death penalty. I will not be proposing full solutions to either of these problems. Instead I will be sketching how the method helps us to formulate questions and focus answers for difficult but commonplace problems.

I have claimed that Feminist Liberation theology presents a fundamental challenge to the discipline of theology. This is because Feminist Liberation theology suggests a new definition of universal as the widest possible range of perspectives which can be brought to bear on an issue, held together within the framework of experience, culture, mystery and tradition in a relationship which results in dialectical conversion. This revised understanding of universal shows how personal and structural change result from theological work.

The impact of such change is felt very slowly but we can already

sense that it is abroad in the field. John Fry proposes that "theologians write theology from the standpoint of the mother in Bombay (or Pittsburgh) whose child has just starved to death."[1] He insists that such a perspective would give an urgency to the solutions and ground abstract theological concepts in the needs of the day. He concludes: "A theology written from that standpoint would have ceased being a problem to itself."[2]

This is the spirit of this conclusion--the application of a method to everyday problems that Christian theology must face. Failing to do so it becomes an historically interesting way that people tried to make sense of their lives. But embracing these issues it becomes a dynamic framework for facilitating the questions of ultimate meaning and value which all of us face in our efforts to live responsibly.

In the following two cases the methodological materials will take precedence over content. I will not be rewriting inclusive language nor presenting a brief for the abolition of the death penalty, though those are two worthy projects. Rather I will be raising the questions which need to be addressed if the issues are going to be discussed theologically according to the new understanding of that discipline which I have presented. In so doing my own presuppositions will be operative. The interaction of presuppositions with method will be evident.

I. Academic Application--God-Language

A critical concern for theology in the late '60's and early '70's was the question of God-language.[3] Following the Death of God movement theologians struggled to articulate the name of divinity as a way into the problem of meaning and value.[4] More recently the God-language problem has surfaced again. This time it is being raised by Feminist theologians like Anne McGrew Bennett, Nelle Morton and Mary Daly.[5] Language is only

the tip of the iceberg for concepts which are in need of reformulation. But it is crucial to the progress of theology to be able to articulate central themes with precision.

Let us move through the four steps of Feminist Liberation theology and then reflect on the presuppositions as they interact with the method. This will illuminate the method in action.

We begin with the experience of oppression. God-language in the Western Christian churches is predominantly exclusive like Father, Ruler, Lord, King, etc. How are we as women, especially Third World women, supposed to interpret the biblical passage that assures us that we are made in the image and likeness of God with this language set? None of our experiences as females and as powerless people is reflected in the traditional imagery.

We realize that a culture's divinity reflects the dreams of its power elite, e.g. God as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, etc. Our dream for equality, unity, mutuality and transcendence should be reflected in our images of God. Nowhere is this reflected in current Christian imagery.

We move on to the cultural context in which we hear and use God-language. In evaluating the prevailing God-language according to social scientific categories we find that it not only reflects the class issues alluded to above but it generates gender exclusion which leaves women out. Further, the prevailing assumption, because it is the prevailing assumption of the culture, is that divinity is white, male and privileged. There is an implicit assumption that divinity is on the side of the powerful, baptizing and confirming the status quo, particularly the imperialism and cultural hegemony which result in oppression for many.

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A hermeneutics of suspicion can be developed with the aid of linguistic, sociological and psychological materials. We can understand how many linguistic options there are and how widely divergent they are. We see that other cultures assign no gender to divinity, for example, or that some languages have no anthropomorphic terms for God at all. Similarly we find that the cultural norms reflect the idea of God, and that grave psychological damage is done to persons who experience systematic exclusion. These are just a sample of the issues which surface in our attempt to rehabilitate God-language.

In the midst of this rather dismal picture of inadequate language and seeming intransigence on the part of those who shape such concerns we can turn to the element of mystery. We realize that mystery is far more complex than any of the accidental factors which govern our discussion of it. Language about God needs to reflect the unlimited, unqualified "size of God."[6] Within the Christian tradition we have a clear history of God being on the side of the oppressed (Psalm 103:6) so the titles of power and might seem inappropriate. Further we have a history of evolving God-language so the notion of moving away from inadequate terminology is not foreign to our collective experience.

Finally, we come from a tradition which places a great deal of emphasis on divinity as a starting point for anthropological reflections. As we begin to realize that women make up part of any anthropology we detect the need for a similar shift in theologos. Some of the renewed expression include Ground of Possibility, Friend, Gracious Provider, etc. At most we can say that current Lord, Ruler, King will be rejected or if used at all only rarely and in combination with other inclusive terms.

Before drawing conclusions and articulating a new experience

we need to look at the presuppositions which ground this work. Forgiveness as possible seems irrelevant until we examine the deep psychic and structural damage which has been done to women and minorities by inadequate God-language. Forgiveness in this sense means change, a move beyond outdated categories. It is a change which involves serious and sustained analysis. It is not easy to shift from comfortable expressions which carry the freight of faith. But it is crucial to shift if the old expressions diminish the faith they are meant to express.

The second presupposition, that hope is warranted, is what gives impetus to the efforts for change. If it were not assured that under the worst of circumstances change could take place, the efforts would be futile. God, of all concepts, is the critical principle that guarantees that change will move us in the direction of greater inclusivity. Hence our language about God must reflect this faith perspective.

The third presupposition seems quite clear: the courage to act justly is expected. This formulation functions in a double capacity vis-a-vis God-language. On the one hand those who feel and are marginalized are bound in conscience not to let their notion of God be truncated by cultural trappings. On the other hand, those who shape God-language, i.e., the writers, liturgists, music directors, teachers, etc., are bound to listen to the faith-based articulations of the marginalized. They are obligated to use their skills for the community.

God-language must conform to the needs of the many and varied groups who struggle for their identity in faith. But in some cases justice demands that prophetic stances be taken such that language about God may not reflect the experiences of some. For instance, in the United States Roman Catholic Church there is a growing movement particularly

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among women to begin to use inclusive language to talk about God. This is resisted by many priests and causes some difficulty in communication. Using a Feminist Liberation model we can see how the two groups approach the same issue with different experiences, from different cultural settings with similar senses of God and very different relationships to the tradition. In this analysis we will weigh the experience of the marginalized and excluded more heavily than the experience of the persons who have power. Hard questions remain but it seems obvious that the interaction of the method and the presupposition of just action will result in a new power dynamic.

The fourth presupposition, the starting point with the struggling poor, grounds this discussion. Here we find the necessity to listen in a special way to those who are saying that they have a new idea but that their ideas heretofore have been systematically excluded. People who ask that God-language be changed to reflect their experience are asking for the right to have their concepts expressed just as others do. With the exception of a very few who would not understand that seeming reverse exclusion (e.g. the use of Goddess) is an iconoclastic effort, most people who call for linguistic change aim at inclusion. This is the only way to guarantee that the 'struggling poor' will have a voice.

There are two major insights which arise from this use of the method. The first is the importance of context and the second is the necessity for a critique of power.

Underlying the four elements of the method is an effort to describe and analyze the context in which theology is set. This provides the theologian with a realistic picture in which to consider various elements, knowing that should the background change so too would the

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theology. Concretely, if I am ministering in a prison with a predominantly Black female population for whom abstract and/or exclusively female language about God would be foreign and distracting in worship then awareness of this context prods me to modify my usual approach. Concrete anthropomorphic imagery may be best here.

The example also raises the power dynamic which is present in all theologizing. The four elements and the presuppositions with which they interact are designed to critique the prevailing power. They are designed to be used dialectically so that there will be an equalization of power which results from the corrective they provide rather than a turnabout resulting in a new power elite.

Using the same example as above, my inclusive but concrete language about God in a women's prison was a compromise. My own preference would be for female (iconoclastic) imagery counched in abstract terms. But since I was 'in power' in the sense of having position and access to the outside I was careful to begin my analysis around imagery with the perspective of the struggling poor thus compensating for or letting go of my power.

This example has not provided us with a definitive and systematic treatment of God-language, nor, regrettably, a strategy for changing it. But it has highlighted the importance of context and power for the doing of theology. It has provided us with an example of the method in action. Context and power and their effect on the doing of theology are reflected in the second example, a Feminist Liberation theology approach to the death penalty.

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II. Pastoral Application--The Death Penalty

The question of capital punishment or the death penalty comes in and out of vogue for theological discussion. Interestingly it has taken a backseat to abortion, birth control and homosexuality, perhaps a sign of how difficult it really is to assess life/death issues. By looking at this through the lens of Feminist Liberation theology I am not aiming at a specific position (though my own opposition will be clear, just as my commitment to inclusive God-language was clear in the other example). Rather I am interested in showing how the discussion can be pursued.

Beginning with experience, I and I would guess most readers of this dissertation have little personal experience with the death penalty in terms of self, family or friends who face it for themselves personally or for a loved one. This in itself is illustrative because there are hundreds of people (with Blacks and other minorities represented in percentages far higher than their percentage of the population) on death rows throughout the country. But all of us have the experience of being affected by executions which are media fodder. We vote for legislators who adopt such measures and we pay taxes which support law enforcement and the criminal justice system. We all have an experience of capital punishment but at various removes from the vent. The theological question is how does a Christian make sense of and respond to the fact that lives are being taken in the name of the government?

In a culture in which the death penalty is taken for granted in certain cases (e.g. killing a uniformed police officer) we need to take a close look at the socio-economic situation. We live in a culture which is class stratified to the extent that it puts pressure on the

poor and people of color so that their possibility of committing a violent crime is exacerbated by the context. In turn they find themselves on death row with greater frequency than white middle class folks who are the primary makers and enforcers of the law.

This analysis, sketchy and simplistic as it is, could include the way in which the legal system is structured to benefit those who can pay, the capitalistic foundation of the United States, etc. But for our purposes it is sufficient to say that any Christian position on the death penalty which does not include a close look at these realities cannot be called theologically adequate.

Third, we factor in the mysterious element or the reality of God. We understand that human life given by God is sacred. As such each life is to be revered. From a Christian perspective talionic justice has no place in a contemporary ethical system. Hence those who hold the position that capital punishment is just find a long-standing argument here.

Finally, we mix tradition into the process and find conflicting material. Tradition holds both the use of capital punishment for crime deterrence and justice, on the one hand. And on the other hand there is a strong tradition of nonviolence in Christianity to counter such influences. Here we see the interstructuring of the method as tradition is read through the hermeneutics of suspicion formed from the perspective of the struggling poor. Biblical texts and criminology literature are subject to a critical reading from the perspective of the oppressed.

The presuppositions give parameters for the analysis. The first one, that forgiveness is possible, can be taken at face value. But at a deeper level we see it as the essence of the Gospel which

transcends any sociological discussion of how crime is prevented by the taking of lives as examples, etc. In even the most horrendous of crimes there is always the possibility of conversion. There is at least the invitation to the community to participate in divine transcendence by forgiving the person in question.

Similarly the second presupposition, that hope is warranted because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, disposes the Christian family to view every situation as if it were in process of being transformed. While seeming to be a naive statement, this rests on the essence of the Christian eschatological claim that persons and structures stand before the judgement of a God who suffered, died and remains with us. This denies the ultimate validity of humans making life and death decisions about one another.

The courage to act justly is expected in the Christian community, the third presupposition, demands prophetic witness in a culture which dispenses justice without regard to context or to power dynamics. It demands witness to the sacrality of life for the born as well as the unborn. It offers the chance to stand over against oppressive structures with the security that other members of the community will understand and support such a position.

Finally, the starting point with the struggling poor, the last of the presuppositions which interact with the four elements of Feminist Liberation theology, grounds praxis around the death penalty. Whether it be writing letters to protest executions, or visiting the condemned in their cells, working with families or lobbying against the death penalty legislation the work grows out of an awareness that persons with death sentences symbolize the ultimate objectification known to us.

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From here we can only push toward humanization, knowing that it is rooted in life not death, in community not isolation.

Both God-language on the academic side and capital punishment on the pastoral side are examples of how Feminist Liberation theology does not admit sharp distinctions between the two approaches. There are profoundly pastoral dimensions to the God-language question and some strictly academic considerations on the capital punishment question.

Feminist Liberation theology is a method which relies on the union of these two poles so that a wholistic treatment of context and power will be assured. The universals which are generated will be re-defined to include as many contexts as possible understood by means of shared stories within the Feminist Liberation framework. Universal will mean an equalization of the power dynamics so that no perspective except that of the struggling poor will be granted special weight. How theology will look when these challenges are taken seriously and the changes taken place is anyone's guess. But that it will look quite different and be more useful to the everyday lives of people is my hope and claim.

I have offered examinations of Feminist and Liberation theologies as well as a comparison of the two. I have looked at various theological methods and extracted four elements which seem indispensible in a renewed method which I have measured by its pluralistic, ecumenical, eschatological, historical and pastoral aspects. I have sketched Feminist Liberation theology, a method of dialectical conversion, which I believe is adequate to the task of contemporary theology. I have presented the method at work in considerations of God-language and the death penalty.

The method is intended to ground and focus discussion. It is

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meant for professional and nonprofessional use so that the discipline of theology will be opened to more than just academicians. The spiral of presuppositions and the fourpart method form a framework for "collaborative creativity" as Lonergan defined method. The dynamic challenge of faith in the service of personal and structural change results in a new moment in the history of theology.

Work remains to be done on the method as it is used and refined in academic and pastoral situations. It is meant to be provisional in this way. It is designed to give general guidance for shared reflection not preprogrammed answers for dogmatic debate. It is meant to facilitate sharing,not cut off possibilities for exchange. Such uses will be considered abuses and will not be taken seriously as theological dialogue. The method is designed for and offered as an aid for companions on the journey in our feeble but faithful attempts to love well and act justly. The adequacy of Feminist Liberation theology will be judged ultimately by how it enhances our God-human-world relationship.

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## NOTES

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[1]John R. Fry, The Great Apostolic Blunder Machine (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 174.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Cf. my unpublished comprehensive examination, "An Essay on God Language," Berkeley, Graduate Theological Union, 1977.

[4]Langdon Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969).

[5]Cf. Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); Nelle Morton, "Beloved Image," unpublished paper from American Academy of Religion meeting, San Francisco, 1978; Anne McGrew Bennett, "Some Theological Implications of the Woman Movement," in Perspectives on Feminist Theology, edited by Mary E. Hunt and Rosino Gibellini, (Brescia, Italy: Queriniana, 1980).

[6]Bernard Loomer, Graduate Theological Union Faculty, Lecture, Berkeley, Fall 1978.

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